



Las Vegas

Arts & Cultural District **Cultural Plan**



NEW MEXICO
arts & cultural
DISTRICT

June 2009

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New Mexico Arts & Cultural District | Las Vegas

Cultural Plan: Introduction

OVERVIEW



Throughout its storied past as a crossroad of the American Southwest, the northeastern New Mexico town of Las Vegas developed the tenacity of a place that has endured the tests of numerous social and economic cycles. With its pedestrian-oriented downtown business districts, family-friendly neighborhoods filled with carefully restored Victorian homes and New Mexican Territorial style adobes, tree-lined boulevards and a thriving education sector embracing three institutions of higher learning, contemporary Las Vegas clearly benefits from these and many other enduring legacies of its forefathers.

In recent years a new crossroad began emerging on the Las Vegas landscape. It was prompted by factors that included the influx of a new generation of creative economy professionals, an expansion of the performing and visual arts programs at local colleges, and perhaps most importantly an awareness of the Las Vegas region's accomplished community of traditional Hispanic artists. Taken as a whole, Las Vegas is developing a locally nuanced creative economy.

For many towns the economic impacts of creative economy professionals have benefited those residents engaged in pursuits ranging from digital design to the fabrication of titanium mountain bike frames. But in Las Vegas' case a broadly based recognition of traditional and contemporary expressions of art and culture as being fundamental components of regional creativity has resulted in an effort addressing the needs of individuals from divergent cultural backgrounds, creative media, age groups, and economic standing.

Led by Las Vegas MainStreet, with support from the City of Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Arts Council, the Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation, the Economic Development Corporation, the three local colleges and other groups, the effort seeks to facilitate the growth of this segment of the local economy while expanding its impact to other parts



of the community. Through the successful completion of a comprehensive application process the community was named as one of two New Mexico municipalities approved as pilot cities under the New Mexico Arts and Cultural District Act in January 2008.

Administered through New Mexico MainStreet, the act promotes implementation of a "...cohesive strategy with place-based arts and culture as an economic niche." Its intent is the enhancement of economies through local and state partnerships offering incentives and expertise necessary for the development of sustainable Arts and Cultural Districts. The act is the result of a collaborative effort between the New Mexico Economic Development Department, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, New Mexico Tourism Department, the McCune Foundation and the New Mexico Museum Foundation.

Expertise in the form of four actions, beginning with the pre-designation draft of a Strategic Plan (SPACE), followed by a Resource Team Assessment, then a Visioning and Branding workshop, as well as an Asset Mapping effort, analyzed numerous facets of the community's arts and cultural sector. The findings of these four initiatives combined with input from community members to help guide this cultural planning process to its conclusions and recommendations.

Las Vegas is a proud and hard working community whose residents not only take pride in their frontera past but who also strive toward finding solutions to contemporary issues that might be framed in ways honoring the legacy of their forefathers. That awareness helped guide the development of this cultural plan, which functions to serve all aspects of this community's diverse arts and cultural sector through the establishing of an exemplary Las Vegas Arts & Cultural District.

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PROCESS

The community-based process that's resulted in the development of an Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan was led by a committee whose members are actively engaged within the Las Vegas arts community, education community, cultural heritage community and the downtown business community. To the committee's benefit, several of its members have interests in more than one of these identities and were thus able to add fresh perspectives to the dialogue of the cultural planning process.

In addition to the dedicated participation of these Las Vegas residents this process was assisted by



a consulting team whose members included staff from New Mexico MainStreet as well as subject matter experts who engaged with the Cultural Plan Committee as consultants supervised by New Mexico MainStreet. Another resource from outside the Las Vegas area that engaged in the effort was the Bureau of Business & Economic



Research of the University of New Mexico's Institute for Applied Research Services (BBER).

These parties took part in an energetic effort that stretched from the early weeks of April, 2008 to the conclusion of the cultural plan's drafting and editing in mid-June, 2009.

In April, 2008 a team of representatives from New Mexico MainStreet conducted a multi-day on-site Arts and Cultural District Resource Team Assessment in Las Vegas, collaborating with Las Vegas MainStreet in a focused effort to determine strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that should be expected as well as factored into the long range contingencies attached to the cultural planning process. The findings of this assessment are discussed in the Technical Findings section of this Introduction.

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In November, 2008 a team of subject matter experts representing New Mexico MainStreet conducted A Visioning Focus Group Branding for the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District. The focus of this phase of the district's planning process was to identify themed images and messages to support the identification and promotion of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District. The findings of this effort are discussed in the Technical Findings section of this Introduction.



From the second week



of January, 2009 up to the middle of June, 2009 there were bi-weekly meetings of the Cultural Plan Committee.

Alternating between the dining facility of Luna Community College and the busy downtown bakery known as Charlie's Spic n' Span Bakery, the committee was a demographically diverse group of local residents dedicated to developing a cultural plan that would address community arts and cultural needs while providing a framework for stabilizing the presence of artists, art businesses and cultural organizations.

MEETING CHALLENGES

The process of developing a cultural plan in support of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District has been greatly assisted through the expertise present on the Cultural Plan Committee. This talented and accomplished group of volunteers is as diverse as the community itself, with representation from all corners of the demographic spectrum.

But this diversity and expertise would not be as fully mobilized for guiding the Arts and Cultural District toward success were it not for the political acumen of several committee members. The members of the committee are extraordinarily effective at leveraging their knowledge of local communication channels in getting word out to the community at large regarding the group's projects and progress.

Maintaining the Cultural Plan Committee's current membership (while eventually expanding it to include new members with expertise and contacts) adds to the clout of the committee's functions. This is one of the main avenues through which the Arts and Cultural District Cultural Planning process can stay on track and achieve its goals. In so doing, the committee will be laying an important foundation that has the potential to improve the economic conditions and professional opportunities within the Arts and Cultural District boundaries. The cultural plan's development will also be taking major steps toward providing the artists and creative field professionals of this diverse region with the kind of opportunities they are currently lacking.

The American Southwest is home to many of the leading arts and cultural institutions serving the interests of the nation's rapidly growing Hispanic, Chicano and Latino populations. There exists a wealth of opportunity for the Las Vegas arts community to network into the fabric of both the traditional and contemporary artistic and cultural mainstreams



tying together cities such as Albuquerque, Denver, Tucson, San Antonio and El Paso.

Through the successful implementation of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan, this impressive, historic community will be setting the stage for becoming a new type of crossroads its founders could never have envisioned in centuries past.

TECHNICAL FINDINGS

Communities qualifying for designation of a New Mexico Arts and Cultural District gain significant benefits. To encourage the development of vibrant, compact, mixed use, well branded arts and cultural districts, communities can institute measures such as a Local Option Gross Receipts Tax increment (LOGRT) to support the district's development. Other options include a doubling of the state tax credit for rehabilitation of historic structures within the boundaries of the Arts and Cultural District. Local options include implementing a Quality of Life Tax to fund the district's ongoing operations.

In developing an Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan to most effectively serve the cultural demographic of this community's residents while at the same time being as supportive as possible of the aspirations of its arts and cultural sector, the state, local, and nonprofit entities behind this effort designed a process to guide and inform the community, its participating volunteers, and local officials.

From a local perspective the development of a Cultural Plan Committee, serving under the direction of Las Vegas Main Street and the Steering Committee for the Arts and Cultural District | Las Vegas, and comprised of nearly a dozen well informed and active members of the community's arts, cultural, education, business and local government sectors, was an important step toward ensuring



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that Las Vegas voices would speak with authority during the development of the Las Vegas Art and Cultural District Cultural Plan. The committee's meetings took place biweekly from early January '09 through mid-June '09 and served to keep this group's efforts on track, on message, and on time.

The UNM Bureau of Business & Economic Research, under direction of Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell, was engaged for the purpose of developing two databases. The first database was the result of a Social Network Analysis that used interviews with key individuals to gather information about the Las Vegas creative sector. A separate database was developed from an Asset Mapping effort targeted at identifying the numerous exhibitions, performance and education facilities serving the local creative sector.



Some of the findings from the UNM BBER study of Las Vegas include the following challenges:

The study revealed an astounding degree of institutional decentralization. Unlike many small towns, a small group of institutions do not dominate the cultural life of Las Vegas.

The principal cultural organizers in town are not fully representative of the population of the region as a whole. (San Miguel County is 75 percent Hispanic, and includes a large number of young adults—both of these populations are under-represented among those engaged in organizational leadership).

There is a surprising degree of geographical disconnect—though Las Vegas is the central point of contact, communities outside of the center are overly dependent upon a few individuals to maintain contact.

The business end of Las Vegas arts and culture tends to proliferate in numbers rather than in financial strength.



The impact of 9/11 on arts & culture industries appears to have been very significant. The impact of this national disaster interrupted what had been ten years of steady growth in the region's industry.

However, recent efforts to organize the arts and cultural community in Las Vegas have shown a measure of success:

- The *Las Vegas Arts Council*, the newly established *Arts & Cultural District Steering Committee* and *MainStreet de Las Vegas* measure the highest in BBER's social network analysis in the statistical terms of "betweenness"—their effectiveness in linking otherwise disparate or disconnected individuals or organizations. These types of organizations are showing to be effective in creating hubs with the potential to organize the huge number of small, far-flung individuals and organizations

that comprise the Las Vegas cultural community.

These and other organizations have established key events that both draw together members of the community and attract others from outside the area. These events help to establish a common identity within and consistent representation of the region to other areas.

"Although many of the measures included in this study emphasize the challenges that Las Vegas faces in developing its arts and cultural economy, the broader message is overwhelmingly positive. The patterns of decentralization described in this study are characteristic of a long history along a unique path of creative development. Indeed, the cultural landscape of present-day Las Vegas is not one of radical disagreement or disparity but of a multiplicity of efforts to maintain the subtle differences and nuances of an otherwise consistent vision of regional traditions. The current challenge is to organize these disparate initiatives in order to be more effective in the emerging regional, national and global cultural economy while at the same preserving the rich differences that exist within the community. The balance of diverse organization and central coordination serves these ends."

UNM BBER Study: Las Vegas Arts & Cultural Industries

In November, 2008 a team of three NMMS consultants working alongside staff from Las Vegas MainStreet conducted "A Visioning Focus Group Branding the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District", a community-wide exercise on the campus of Luna Community College. Originally structured toward identifying branding themes for the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District, the exercise's participants also discussed "...themes and opportunities critical to the district's success, as well as the effectiveness of branding campaigns." A SWOT analysis detailed

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various strengths/weaknesses/opportunities that related to the current identity of Las Vegas. Participants proceeded to visualize the best-case scenarios of a Las Vegas in 2015, linking that visualization to the goals of a community branding campaign.



In April, 2008 a team of NMMS staff and consultants working alongside staff from Las Vegas MainStreet conducted an "Arts and Cultural District Resource Team Assessment", whose working groups addressed four subject areas determined to be key to the success of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District. Tasked with providing the community and the Las Vegas Art and Cultural District Steering Committee with expertise and insight into best practices drawn from successful similar efforts in other parts of the nation, subcommittees were assigned to address each of the four key subject areas.

In its general findings the Resource Team identified four values critical to the success of the cultural planning process: Communication, Coordination, Collaboration and Community.

In its specific recommendations relating to the four key subject areas the subcommittees reported their findings to the Resource Team as a whole.

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New Mexico Arts & Cultural District | Las Vegas

Cultural Plan: Vision, Mission, Strategies

The unique history of Las Vegas provides its modern day residents with a solid foundation through which the community can define its future. The choices we make today will determine what kind of future we create for generations to come.

VISION

Las Vegas as a unique American Cultural Treasure.

MISSION

Keep traditions alive while creating a vibrant artistic and cultural future.

STRATEGIES

1. **Preserve, protect and promote our multiplicity of authentic cultural and artistic traditions.** Based on respect for all traditions, this strategy ensures continuity, growth and relevancy for visitors as well as local residents, especially younger residents. The processes, stories and intent that lie behind the various cultural traditions of the region will be conveyed in compelling ways.
2. **Celebrate the various histories and peoples of Las Vegas and the surrounding region.** As described in the Introduction, the history of the region is long and multilayered. Keeping this diversity of narratives alive is the foundation of learning, understanding and compassion. A compassionate – and even enthusiastic – grasp of the traditions of others is necessary to build strong bonds across cultural boundaries.
3. **Build bridges between East and West,**



sacred and secular, traditional and contemporary, past and future. The history of the region is long, complex and multilayered – like a fine wine. Despite the fact that some of that history was contentious, all of it is now a part of the rich historic and cultural fabric of Las Vegas. Everyone here is a part of that story.

The collective and multi-faceted story we tell about ourselves becomes the foundation for envisioning our future and a key to building bridges connecting all of us.

4. Develop rich artistic, cultural and economic opportunities for Las Vegas and its residents.

From co-op galleries and studio space to production facilities and broadband infrastructure; from entry-level jobs in galleries and design firms to entrepreneurial development and outbound marketing programs -- we will design, plan and implement the practical and logistical elements required for successful creative ventures and community-wide economic vitality.

5. Put Las Vegas on the map as a unique American cultural treasure. New Mexico is already well known as a center for traditional Native American and Spanish Colonial arts... but Las Vegas is known, (if it is known at all), primarily as a gritty wild-west town. This is definitely a fascinating part of its history, but also marginalizes other aspects of the unique character of Las Vegas. Emphasizing the rich traditions of Las Vegas and its surrounding region will further define Las Vegas as a National Treasure – an original source of art and culture in New Mexico.



New Mexico Arts & Cultural District | Las Vegas

Cultural Plan: Five Approaches

The major cultural objectives will be implemented in coordination with the five tactical approaches outlined in the Strategic Plan for an Arts & Cultural Environment (SPACE):

- 1. Talent Development**
- 2. Economic Assistance**
- 3. Infrastructure Development**
- 4. Community Coordination**
- 5. Coherent Marketing**

Talent Development: Offer robust artistic and cultural training & educational programs. These programs will emphasize education for children and young adults, and provide rich educational opportunities, for Las Vegas of all ages, backgrounds and economic situations. The programs will run the gamut from traditional to contemporary, from hand-made to high-tech, from local to international, and from spiritual to practical.

Implementation Example: The UWC Arts & Cultural Community Educational Center project

Economic Assistance: Provide business opportunities for creative professionals and cultural entrepreneurs. Artists, designers, musicians, writers – the entire range of creative activity will be supported with internship and mentoring programs, business startup assistance (including financing) and continuing business education opportunities. The objective is to give creative professionals and cultural entrepreneurs in Las Vegas the best chance of success possible. Printed material may be made available in Spanish where practical.

Implementation Example: The Mentorship program offered by the EDC and business programs at Highlands, Luna and UWC.

Infrastructure Development: Identify and implement working space and opportunities for exhibiting and/or performing work. This may range from special exhibitions to studio space, rehearsal space, co-op galleries, live/work facilities, and co-op workshops – the entire gamut of tools and facilities required by the full range of working creative professionals.

Implementation Examples: MainStreet programs to work with property owners to make use of underutilized buildings; programs by area colleges to develop art exhibition space in the District.

Community Coordination: Special and signature events, volunteer development, sharing of responsibilities. Events and special programs require bringing together many different people with expertise in a variety of areas. Coordinating such events will be shared across the full spectrum of Las Vegas entities and organizations and will utilize community-specific channels and methods of communication to encourage participation in events and programs. The more participation

there is, the more sense of ownership will be engendered among many. This will result in healthier, more energetic, more creative and more sustainable results.

Implementation Example: Heritage Week

Coherent Marketing: Emphasize the history and traditions of Las Vegas in its branding. Many cities and regions try to develop brands by hiring marketing experts – but most brands that are developed this way are unsuccessful because standard “market think” tends to shoot for the lowest common denominator. Las Vegas has an authentic character that is unique among small American cities. That authenticity is based upon its striking history and complex culture. Making that authenticity the core of its brand is key. We will develop authentic and effective frameworks for elevating awareness of the community brand. All marketing will be based upon the collective narrative of Las Vegas.

Implementation Example: Branding, marketing programs in the works.



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Cultural Plan: Tactical Plan

This section outlines the tactical implementation program that executes the strategic goals of the Cultural Plan.

NOTE: This is a "living plan" that will evolve as we move forward. The items listed below will be implemented in the first year following the adoption of this plan.

Some of these tactical initiatives are ongoing programs that, once started, will continue indefinitely. Some are projects, with a definite beginning, middle and end. Some of these programs or projects are already in existence, but need to be integrated into, and supported by, the overall Strategic Plan.

The Cultural Plan Tactical Roadmap consists of five interrelated components:

- **Talent Development**
Identify and nurture local talent
- **Economic Assistance**
Emphasize locally-owned arts & culture small business development and growth
- **Infrastructure Development**
Provide affordable physical and digital infrastructure to the local creative community
- **Community Coordination**
Coordinate community resources and develop organizational capacity to optimize benefits for the entire community
- **Coherent Marketing**
Consistently market Las Vegas in a positive, creative and comprehensive manner

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INITIATE IN YEAR ONE

Talent Development

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (in coordination with local schools)

- ❑ Support existing talent with training and marketing
 - ❖ Help emerging local arts professionals establish themselves and grow through basic business training and cooperative marketing
- ❑ Develop up-and-coming talent
 - ❖ Identify young artists and craftspeople and provide them with special educational and business opportunities including arts entrepreneurship workshops, guest

lectures and field trips to the artist studios, craft workshops and design firms.

- ❑ Seniors to Youth Art Mentoring and Instruction
 - ❖ *Senior artists share their technique and heritage with young artists as a means of preserving and continuing the area's cultural heritage, and transmitting stories of its past.*

SHOWCASE LOCAL TALENT

- ❑ Organize regularly recurring Student Shows
 - ❖ *Student shows of top talent chosen by instructors at our local elementary, middle and high schools and colleges, hosted in the Arts & Culture District during monthly Artwalks provide recognition for young talent*
- ❑ Organize shows of local traditional arts
 - ❖ *Shows featuring local artists and artisans working in traditional forms and media, will highlight the area's vibrant history and overlapping cultures. The first such show, a Celebration of Spanish Arts will be held in conjunction with Heritage Week in July, 2009 at Royal Mastodon Society. Concurrently, DeMare Fine Art will host a show of contemporary Hispanic Art.*
- ❑ Public Art
 - ❖ *Showcase local sculptors, muralists, musicians, and performance artists in all parts of the Arts & Cultural District, sometimes tied into the monthly Artwalk.*
- ❑ Outdoor Summer Arts Market
 - ❖ *Development of a outdoor arts market for the summer months to coincide with the Saturday Farmer's Market at the proposed Valencia Square venue, as well as during the Artwalk.*

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COMMUNITY-WIDE ART EVENTS

- ❑ Second Saturdays: the monthly Arts & Culture District Artwalk
 - ❖ *Develop a regular venue to feature local established and emerging artists during Artwalks.*
 - ❖ *Develop more art events to showcase local student and faculty talent.*

COMMUNITY-WIDE CULTURAL ENRICHMENT EVENTS

- ❑ Produce Symposia, Workshops, Panel Discussions, Art Exhibitions and Art Demonstrations
 - ❖ *Expand upon open-to-the-public educational lectures and exhibitions featuring local history and culture currently being presented by the CCHP, NMHU, Tome on the Range, Casa de Cultura, the Rough Rider Museum and others.*
 - ❖ *Skills and career advancement presentations by established local artists and business professionals.*
 - ❖ *Secure funding for additional educational offerings open to the public.*

Economic Assistance

ENTREPRENEUR / BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

- ❑ Develop cooperative and multi-focused entrepreneurial training programs
 - ❖ *Provide artists, musicians, designers, etc., with regularly-scheduled training by local*

experts in how to start and operate a business in Las Vegas.

- ❖ *Develop an internship / mentorship program in coordination with our three local colleges and two high schools. Internships will be hosted by local businesses and mentors will be recruited from our local pool of creative professionals.*

A PRO-ACTIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- ❑ Offer low-interest loans and micro-loans
 - ❖ *Lay the groundwork for a community bank to offer cultural entrepreneurs and property owners low-interest and business start-up micro-loans.*
 - ❖ *Work with local banks to support creative business startups and expansions.*

NETWORKING

- ❑ Develop a constantly evolving networking database
 - ❖ *This database would include artists and craftspeople in every category, gallerists, business services, community organization contacts, etc.*
- ❑ Friday Night Lights: monthly networking meetings and mixers.
 - ❖ *Host a variety of community networking and professional development events for creative professionals, including mixers, panel discussions and demonstrations.*
 - ❖ *Host these events on the Friday nights before Second Saturdays.*

ORDINANCES

- ❑ Develop an enterprise-zone style / general business environment
 - ❖ *Goals: art / media related business license fees waived for three years; emphasis on arts, design, culture, multimedia, educational, technology and intellectual property-generating business*
 - ❖ *Encourage and enable local property ownership*

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CO-OP PROGRAMS

- ❑ Attract and retain talent with economic incentives
 - ❖ *Assure a supply of low cost studio space, low cost co-op exhibition space*
 - ❖ *Develop city-wide co-op marketing and PR programs to support local arts and cultural activities, events and businesses.*

Infrastructure Development

- ❑ Develop physical Infrastructure
 - ❖ *Initiate adaptive-reuse building renovations to create residential artist lofts*
 - ❖ *Invest in the development of individual and co-op art studios*
 - ❖ *Encourage the launch of galleries that feature the work of local artists*
 - ❖ *Fund workshop venues (offset the costs of hosting workshops, symposia, etc.)*
 - ❖ *Work with property owners to make windows available for art window displays*

Community Coordination and Capacity

- ❑ Involve and coordinate local artists, neighborhoods, organizations and schools in the

planning and implementation of local Arts & Culture events.

- ❑ Enhance organizational capacity (funding, boards of directors, guidance, volunteers, etc.) to implement new projects and grow existing programs.
- ❑ Coordinate inter-organizational fundraising, staffing and project coordination.

Coherent Marketing

- ❑ Develop the Brand
 - ❖ *Develop a very strong brand for Las Vegas as an Arts Community and Destination that features the unique history and overlapping cultures of Las Vegas and the surrounding region.*
- ❑ Implement Coherent Communications
 - ❖ *Coordinate communications and PR for consistency*
 - ❖ *Develop community-wide cooperative marketing programs*
 - ❖ *Develop and fund city event marketing programs*
- ❑ Build an Accurate Contact Database
 - ❖ *Allow artists, businesses, organizations and event organizers to self-update their contact information as needed*
- ❑ Identify and implement an International Sister Cities Program with:
 - ❖ *A city, town or region in Spain where many local families originated from*
 - ❖ *Mexico City or other town along the El Camino Real*
 - ❖ *Dodge City or other town along the Santa Fe Trail*
 - ❖ *Flagstaff or St. Louis or other town along Route 66*
 - ❖ *Chicago or Los Angeles or other town along the Amtrak Southwest Chief Line*
 - ❖ *The Navajo, Apache and/or Comanche Nation.*
 - ❖ *Additional European, South American, African and Asian cities or towns for cultural exchange programs (in coordination with UWC).*

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Public Input on Cultural Plan

- ❑ Post the Cultural Plan online and offer a web-based forum and comments devoted to this plan. Ask the City of Las Vegas, Chamber of Commerce, EDC, Las Vegas Arts Council, and other local organizations to link to the plan online.
- ❑ Regular visits on KFUN and other local radio stations to discuss the Cultural Plan and invite public comments
- ❑ Publish highlights of the Cultural Plan in local newspapers
- ❑ Public presentations and discussions of the Cultural Plan in development across the town and region.
- ❑ Publish periodic handouts on the Cultural Plan's content and progress and make them available at the City of Las Vegas offices, the Public Library, MainStreet, Chamber of Commerce, Las Vegas Arts Council, and other local organizations

New Mexico Arts & Cultural District | Las Vegas

Appendices

**1. SPACE (Strategic Plan for an Arts & Cultural Environment),
September 2007.**

2. New Mexico Main Street Resource Team Report,

Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District, June 2008.

3. New Mexico Main Street Branding and Visioning Report,

Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District, December 2008.

4. UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER)

Las Vegas Arts and Cultural Industries Report, June 2008.

SPACE | Las Vegas

Strategic Plan for an Arts & Culture Environment Las Vegas, New Mexico

Roy Montibon: Draft v4b: 9.12.07

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“Nationally, the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$166.2 billion in economic activity every year—\$63.1 billion in spending by organizations and an additional \$103.1 billion in event-related spending by their audiences. The \$166.2 billion in total economic activity has a significant national impact, generating the following:

- 5.7 million full-time equivalent jobs
- \$104.2 billion in household income
- \$7.9 billion in local government tax revenues”

- From the *Arts & Economic Prosperity* Report
by Americans for the Arts
.....

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SPACE | Las Vegas
Strategic Plan for an Arts & Culture Environment
Las Vegas, New Mexico

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SPACE | Las Vegas
Strategic Plan for an Arts & Culture Environment
Las Vegas, New Mexico

Roy Montibon: Draft: 9.12.07

Introduction

Las Vegas and its surrounding region is a complex, ancient and unique tapestry – woven from overlapping threads of cultural, social, technological and geologic history.

Located where the Sangre de Cristo range tumbles down into the High Plains to the east and the Chihauhuan desert to the south, the Las Vegas region has served as a gateway between east and west for nomadic Apache and Comanche tribes, French fur trappers, Spanish explorers, westward migrating pioneers, fevered gold miners, outlaws on the run, east coast merchants, movie crews from Hollywood, roving retirees in RVs, bikers on Harleys, tourists in search of the authentic Wild West, and most recently, urban expatriates seeking the perfect place to live life on their own terms.

Despite this magnificent history, Las Vegas is at a crossroads. Like many small towns across America today, its buildings are crumbling, its elders are aging, its children are leaving, its future is uncertain.

As with many small towns, it can seem that the only choices are bad ones: a future of soul-killing sprawl and low paying service jobs; polluting factories (with its attendant corporate dominance of civic life); or a slow economic death.

This Strategic Plan presents a better choice: a vibrant future for Las Vegas and its surrounding region as a dynamic cultural community and a nationally recognized arts destination.

This is a choice that will provide a lasting, broad-based social and economic uplift to the community, while preserving and enhancing the unique character of Las Vegas and its surrounding region – and defending it against characterless development and sprawl.

Arts & Culture can be a key component in the total economic mix of Las Vegas. Arts & Culture (plus related design and technological innovation) represent clean, economic-base industries that pull in income from outside of the area. Arts & Culture encourages tourism, which is also a classic economic-base industry. Arts & Culture is stable – it's based upon hundreds, if not thousands of small businesses, and is therefore not vulnerable to the economic disaster of a single large employer pulling out of an area.

This document lays out a step-by-step plan to realize this vision for Las Vegas based on its **unique assets**; its **untapped resources**; and the **creativity of its citizens**.

The Purpose of SPACE | Las Vegas

The purpose of this plan is to clarify goals, inspire action and identify opportunities and define guiding principles in the hands-on creation of an optimal future for Las Vegas and its citizens.

This Strategic Plan is a practical and comprehensive action plan – encompassing *talent development, economic assistance, infrastructure development, community coordination and coherent marketing.*

Beginning with the creation of an official Arts & Culture district which overlays the entire MainStreet Corridor, (from the Railroad District, to the New Downtown area of Grand Avenue and Douglas, up 12th Street to the Old Town District of Bridge Street and the Plaza), an emphasis on encouraging creative activity and entrepreneurialism in Las Vegas is the key to unlocking a rich and vibrant future for our community.

The city of Las Vegas is at a crucial juncture in its history, and has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to seize control of its destiny. The history of the city and its surrounding region is one of constant change: the arrival of Spanish explorers and the establishment of missions; the introduction of the horse to tribal cultures; the Santa Fe Trail as a conduit for westward migration; the Santa Fe railroad as a conduit for large-scale commerce; and Route 66 and its automobile-enabled outflow from small towns toward employment in large cities; With these changes came growth and expansion, followed by a long economic decline in the last half of last century.

Today, with the arrival of the 21st Century and its full transition from industrial to knowledge-based economies, there is an Internet-enabled exodus of urban professionals moving from large congested cities back into smaller cities, including Las Vegas. *Jobs are not what they once were – today, economic connectivity and quality of life are key.*

Change is inevitable and stasis is not an option. The future will “happen” – for better or for worse – regardless of whether we plan for it or not. Left on their own, things (i.e., buildings, roads, bridges, infrastructure, entire cities) will self-destruct. Better to envision and creatively work towards a positive future that preserves our unique natural and historic assets, than to find ourselves facing either a bland and characterless corporate future, or slow economic suicide.

Las Vegas is in the enviable position of being able to avoid the irreversible mistakes made by other communities such as Sedona, AZ, (unplanned growth caused by passive civic leadership resulting in the rapid destruction of the very thing that makes Sedona unique); Menifee, CA, (unrestrained developer-driven building – over 5,000 development applications being processed currently in Riverside County, according to the LA Times – resulting in total, Stepford Wives-style carpet-bomb suburbanization of the formerly open landscape); or many communities everywhere, (now virtual ghost-towns), who have sat idly by as their economies slid into oblivion.

This Strategic Plan is both a *tool of inspiration* – and a *roadmap* to an environmentally clean and economically healthy future for this community that is based upon a broad – and deep – cultural foundation. We will create a higher standard of living for everyone by focusing on nurturing the creative elements of our community.

Executive Summary: The Strategic Plan at a Glance

Las Vegas is a confluence of rare attributes and unique overlapping histories. It has assets and resources that cannot be replicated elsewhere.

Beginning with the establishment of an Arts & Culture District that links both sides of our town together, we will focus on building the elements necessary to transform Las Vegas into a vibrant arts community and a dynamic cultural destination.

By valuing creativity and taking a comprehensive approach towards solving problems, we can build a thriving economy based on a clean, economic-base art, design and culture industry that preserves the unique character of the city and protects its surrounding region.

VISION

Las Vegas, New Mexico as a National Treasure.

MISSION

Build Las Vegas into a thriving Arts Community and Cultural Destination

OBJECTIVES

1. Enable talent to flourish
2. Support local community/arts programs and entrepreneurial activity
3. Design and develop a robust arts, design and culture infrastructure
4. Significantly improve the overall quality of life
5. Build local and regional audiences

STRATEGIES

1. Build a coherent brand for Las Vegas as a unique Arts City.
2. Develop financial and professional support for arts organizations and businesses
3. Identify, nurture and help establish new talent
4. Develop and implement innovative arts, design and technology education programs
5. Grow a robust arts and artist networking infrastructure
6. Support existing venues / create new art venues in an Arts & Culture District
7. Coordinate closely with existing businesses and community organizations
8. Create opportunities for related service, consulting and retail businesses
9. Develop and implement coherent, cooperative marketing initiatives
10. Provide a fabulous experience for visitors and event attendees

TACTICS

1. Talent Development
2. Economic Assistance
3. Infrastructure Development
4. Community Coordination
5. Coherent Marketing

Section 1

Envisioning the Future: What We Can Become

VISION

Las Vegas, New Mexico as a National Treasure.

Las Vegas recognized as a *National Treasure* for its *history*, its architecture, its *cultural vitality* and its *surrounding natural beauty*, by people everywhere.

Las Vegas is already unique. By taking a comprehensive approach, and further differentiating the city as an Arts & Culture Community, Las Vegas can move boldly into its next historic phase while preserving its historic character and protecting its natural attributes.

MISSION

Build Las Vegas into a thriving Arts Community and Cultural Destination

By centering the regional economy around arts, design, culture and technology, Las Vegas gains the myriad advantages outlined by Richard Florida in his books, *Rise of the Creative Class*; avoids the pitfalls encountered by other communities without a comprehensive economic strategy; and enjoys the benefits of a creative engine driving the economy, including imaginative civic problem solving and a vastly increased quality of life, characterized by expanding choices and opportunities for the residents of Las Vegas.

Las Vegas will be epicenter of creative activity for the entire surrounding region, its energy radiating outward, with artistic centers beyond the city limits radiating energy back in.

OBJECTIVES

1. Enable talent to flourish

Culture is built from the bottom up. Talent that is enabled to flourish naturally expands both its depth (traditional to contemporary) and its range (weaving and ceramics to digital media). Culture *industry* spontaneously blossoms out of artistic *activity*.

2. Support local community/arts programs and entrepreneurial activity

Once a critical mass of creative energy is there, it becomes self-perpetrating. A little additional knowledge, mentoring and technical assistance goes a long way. Developing a *creative community mindset* that values artistic insight will provide dividends to the entire community in ways that we cannot even imagine.

3. Design and develop a robust arts and culture infrastructure

The arts require **space**. Space to work, space to show, space to congregate. Creative professionals also need ready access to the right support services (i.e., art supplies, digital equipment, technical services, tools, cameras, lighting, equipment rentals, etc.) at the right time (i.e., right *now*). Rapid prototyping and

production are crucial, because delays in access lower the energy level – and the level of artistic energy is contagious.

4. Significantly improve the overall quality of life

Access to world-class cultural offerings (art, plays, music, poetry, literature, etc.) are a key component to any definition of “quality of life”. A healthy environment, access to quality educational resources, and access to opportunity (both creative and business) are three additional quality of life benchmarks that Las Vegas already has, but these can be more effectively utilized and elevated, integrated and grown, at very high standards.

5. Build local and regional audiences

Building awareness for our Arts & Culture activities and events, both internally and externally will allow us to encourage local participation (crucial to elevating quality of life for local citizens) while generating arts tourism.

STRATEGIES

1. Build a coherent brand for Las Vegas as a unique Arts City.

Technically, since brands are reputation based, they are grown and nurtured, not “built”. However, we can begin to elevate our internal awareness of our “brand” (while propagating it widely), by developing a very strong city logo, tag line and coherent approach to all media and collateral materials. The tag line will not in any way reference any other city... we are our own place, with our own identity. “Made in Las Vegas, New Mexico” should become a point of pride.

2. Develop financial and professional support for arts organizations and art businesses

Any artist or art organization, considering establishing themselves or expanding here, should have top quality business support mechanisms available to them. This is key to retaining talent in the area as well as attracting new talent. This is also crucial to assuring that individual artists and arts organizations have every opportunity to enjoy success in Las Vegas.

3. Identify, nurture and help establish new talent

Beginning in elementary school, through high school and college, we can work with educators to identify and nurture up-and-coming local talent as well as encourage that talent to establish a base here, rather than moving immediately to a large city to establish a career. Also, we should keep in contact with talented individuals who do leave – as our art scene grows and prospers, they may decide to move back home and grow their art practice locally.

4. Develop and implement innovative arts education programs

As described below, a comprehensive arts education program is not only key to developing talent and raising scholastic performance, but is also crucial to developing flexible problem solving skills that can be applied to every aspect of life. Having this skill set is *the* dividing line between a happy, productive life and a difficult, problematic life.

All art making involves envisioning multiple outcomes and choosing wisely. All art making involved hundreds, if not thousands of decision steps and requires prioritization, sequencing, eliminating elements that aren't working (i.e., not falling in love with any given element) and arriving at a coherent result – on purpose, not by accident. Artists start with *nothing* but an idea, and end up with *something extraordinary* – over and over. *Every one of these skills is crucial for*

living a productive and fulfilling life. Significantly, every one of these skills is also crucial for success *in business.*

5. Grow a robust arts and artist networking infrastructure

Artists in all varieties don't exist in a void. It's just as important for painters to connect with dealers and buyers, as it is for authors to connect with editors and publishers, or for theatrical producers to connect with set designers, lighting technicians, stage managers, actors and ultimately, audiences. Developing a comprehensive networking database, plus a live scene where talented people (including patrons and investors) can meet spontaneously is a crucial element to kick the Arts & Culture initiative up to a higher, self-perpetrating "growth" level.

6. Support existing venues / create new art venues

Venues that can host a variety of events, exhibitions, performances and installations can be:

- designed into renovated historic structures
- built from scratch in a way that is compatible with the tone and history of the town (i.e., not necessarily a pseudo-historic structure, but a new structure that is integrated into its site and local context – for example, a new building on Bridge Street would necessarily look much different than a new building in the Rail Road District which may be much larger and warehouse-like)
- integrated into currently empty spaces, indoors or out, or
- hosted in existing venues

7. Coordinate closely with existing businesses and community organizations

This will include everything from coordinating a comprehensive visitor experience during events (i.e., restaurants and cafes open), to working with local service organizations (i.e., Rotary, Kiwanis or Key Club); to coordinating with the Chamber, EDC or various government agencies to implement specific programs.

8. Create opportunities for related service, consulting and retail businesses

Many businesses will benefit from the transformation of Las Vegas into an Arts & Culture region. Besides galleries, restaurants and hotels, this initiative will also directly benefit clothing stores, gas stations, other retail stores, fast food establishments, and even Wal Mart; and indirectly benefits banks, real estate agents, professional service providers -- as well as city and county government through the collection of increased tax revenues.

9. Develop and implement coherent, cooperative marketing initiatives

Marketing Las Vegas as a tourist destination is a key element of this Strategic Plan. Marketing and PR will directly support our brand position as well as bring in both local and outside audiences for Arts & Culture events. Additionally, it's an opportunity to get the word out about our local talent and arts scene and give our artists, designers and cultural leaders regional and national recognition.

10. Provide a fabulous experience for visitors and event attendees

Being mindful of the totality of the experience that visitors to our city receive is crucial to our success as an Arts & Culture destination. *Every visitor is an ambassador for Las Vegas... and should be treated that way.*

TACTICS

Talent Development

- Support existing talent with training and marketing
- Develop up-and-coming talent
- Attract new talent
- Develop comprehensive Arts Education programs with local schools
- Develop Art Mentorship programs
- Provide educational Studio Tours to local students
- Schedule open and curated Group Shows
- Organize regularly recurring Student Shows
- Host a monthly Arts & Culture District Artwalk
- Produce Symposia, Workshops and Panel Discussions
- Offer Quarterly Public Studio Tours
- Creation of a county-wide arts “4-H”-like program for high-school students
- Design specific “starter” programs for young Artists, Musicians, Theatrical Producers (and Artists), Architects, Web Designers, Graphic Designers, Digital Filmmakers, Textile Artists, Jewelry Designers, Furniture Designers, etc.

Economic Assistance

- Develop entrepreneurial training programs in coordination with local schools
- Offer start-ups comprehensive business and professional support services
- Offer low-interest loans and micro-loans
- Offer ongoing business support networking
- Develop a constantly evolving “self-serve” networking database
- Host meetings, mixers, presentations
- Develop an enterprise-zone style / pro-active business environment
- Attract and retain talent with economic incentives

Infrastructure Development

- Develop physical Infrastructure
- Expand digital infrastructure
- Augment educational infrastructure

Community Coordination

- Involve and coordinate:
 - businesses
 - service organizations
 - community organizations
 - neighborhood groups
 - individual volunteers

Coherent Marketing

- Develop the Brand
- Implement Coherent Communications
- Manage a Comprehensive Arts and Public Event Calendar
- Build an Accurate Contact Database
- Track Feedback

Section 2

Overview and Assessment: A Reality Check

Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

We can do more – much more – with what we have, while avoiding the pitfalls that other communities have drifted into due to lack of foresight. Three keys to effective planning are to: know your *strengths* and *weaknesses*; be acutely aware of *threats*; and accurately *identify and evaluate possible opportunities*.

STRENGTHS

Assets

Architectural Heritage

Las Vegas has a significant architectural heritage with excellent examples of period design spanning four centuries, and is home to more buildings and homes listed or nominated on the National Register of Historic Places than any other city in the U.S. regardless of size – over 918.

The unique architectural heritage of Las Vegas, has been well preserved: passively, by decades of economic decline; and actively, by the hard work of many dedicated preservationists and renovators.

Such a rich architectural heritage, this well preserved, is valued and sought out by others. During Santa Fe's Design Week, Italo Lupi, Editor-in-Chief of *Abitare Magazine* from Milan, Italy leads a tour called, *Architectural Majesty of Northern New Mexico*, that includes the Dwan Light Sanctuary at United World College and the Victorian homes of Las Vegas.

Beauty of Surrounding Landscapes

Local ecological zones include: pristine grassland (where the deer and the antelope roam); high desert scrub; sub-alpine aspen- and pine-covered mountains; and pastoral green valleys – all within a 15 mile radius.

One feels like a khaki-clad naturalist on a National Geographic Special while observing thousands of migrating birds congregating on Crane Lake. Dropping into the Mora Valley via Ledoux at sunset feels like one is entering Brigadoon... pinch yourself to make sure it's real. And one wouldn't be too surprised to suddenly hear Julie Andrews on one's car stereo, singing, "The Sound of Music" while cruising towards Pandaries. South of town, the drive from Ribera to Villanneuva State Park is one to savor. *No matter which way you go, the area surrounding Las Vegas is drop dead gorgeous.*

Clean Air

The region boasts some of the cleanest air in the country, and is nationally known as a top location for star watching. The May, 2006 issue of *Outside Magazine*, in a cover story called, "50 Things You Must Do Before You Die",

listed as number 7, a visit to Las Vegas, New Mexico and the Star Hill Inn. *Many Hollywood stars live in proximity to the Las Vegas region, but the most impressive stars are the ones seen swirling in the cloudless night sky.*

Cultural Diversity

Las Vegas boasts a deep and historic cultural diversity. Home to a variety of Native American tribes, the Las Vegas region was later claimed as Spanish Territory by early Spanish explorers. From 1821 to 1848 this entire area (and a good chunk of the west) was a part of Mexico. New Mexico was annexed to the United States as a Territory in 1850, but wasn't admitted to the Union as the 47th State until 1921. The city of New Mexico is a naturally bi-lingual city.

Natural Limits to Sprawl

Las Vegas is surrounded by landscape features that also form natural limits to sprawl: the Santa Fe National Forest to the west; expansive ranchlands to the north and east; and the 8,672 acre Las Vegas National Wildlife Preserve to the south east. Assuming our local ranchers don't sell out to condo and strip-mall developers, *these protected and semi-protected features, combined with a severely limited water supply, will help limit sprawl.*

Resources

Three Colleges

It is home to three colleges – amazing for a city of only 16,000. Together, *New Mexico Highlands University, Luna Community College and United World College* (the only American campus of an international leadership prep school founded by Lord Mountbatten and was subsequently headed by Prince Charles, then HM Queen Noor of Jordan and Nelson Mandela) are home to roughly 5,875 students.

All three colleges have programs (in addition to general liberal arts studies) that turn out skilled and talented students in a variety of art-related areas: from wrought iron work to painting; from music to digital filmmaking; from writing to welding and custom auto body work. Many of these talented students simply... vanish. *Las Vegas can do a much better job of retaining its talented graduates.*

A Pro-Active Community

This community is home to a number of very active volunteer organizations: the Citizen's Committee for Historic Preservation, MainStreet Las Vegas, the Las Vegas Arts Council among them. In addition, there are numerous neighborhood groups dedicated to a variety of causes: combating heavy truck traffic through historic neighborhoods; capturing, neutering and placing feral cats; fighting unfair taxation on natural gas; agitating for better water management; advocating for alternative energy; cleaning up litter; assisting the elderly with home maintenance; and building low-income housing. *This level of community interaction is impressive and highly valuable – and is also a prerequisite to building a true arts and culture-based community.*

A Strong Preservation Ethic

The fact that Las Vegas has over 900 homes and buildings listed or nominated on the National Register of Historic Places is stunning. Every home or building that is renovated has a positive impact on the property values, perception and psychology of its neighborhood. Many property owners in Las Vegas are serial renovators – setting a strong example and contributing well beyond the norm to the uplift of the community.

It is largely due to the dedication and hard work of these preservationists, responsible property owners and renovators that Las Vegas has developed a well-earned reputation as an architectural showcase. *It is a priority of the Arts & Culture District, and of this Strategic Plan to preserve this irreplaceable architectural heritage.*

Local Talent

The arts have always played a significant role in New Mexico culture. Las Vegas and its surrounding region has a sizable population of painters, photographers, writers, poets, musicians, designers, weavers, carpenters, custom car and motorcycle builders, etc. *We have an opportunity for the entire community to recognize and promote our local talent.*

WEAKNESSES

Infrastructure

Limited Water Supply

The town's limited water supply is both a weakness – and a *preservation resource* (as described above). Since the water supply will limit the amount of physical development that can occur in and around the city, the natural physical beauty of the area will tend to be passively preserved. Complimented with our active preservation efforts, and an emphasis on a clean Arts & Culture economy, the town's historic and physical assets will not be ruined.

This limit to physical growth necessitates creative responses to the challenge of ***enhancing economic development while minimizing physical development.***

This Plan is an answer to that challenge.

Limited Cultural Facilities

Though Las Vegas does have some excellent arts and performing arts facilities (such as Ilfeld Auditorium), in order to grow our base as an arts community, and to attract and retain top-tier talent, more quality arts facilities are needed. These include art studios, loft apartments, galleries, multi-function art spaces, small stages for music, workshops and theater, music rehearsal spaces, recording studios, audio and digital video post-production studios, small sound stages, screening rooms and movie theaters.

These facilities may take the form of: renovated structures partly funded by grant monies; new structures built and operated by private companies; or ad hoc spaces put to use by artists themselves (such as mounting temporary exhibitions

on the ground floor of empty buildings with the permission of the property owner).
All three approaches are necessary for a vibrant, well-rounded arts scene.

Economy

Limited Outside Investment

Because of the area's decades-long economic stagnation, and despite the presence of three colleges and two hospitals, outside investment in the town has been limited. Like the restricted water supply, this is a mixed blessing. This lack of outside interest has limited chain-store sprawl to a small area along Highway 518 north of Mills.

Challenge: Implementing this Strategic Plan will require attracting certain levels of outside investment. Some of this will come in the form of government or foundation grants; some in the form of small business entrepreneurs relocating or launching their businesses here; and some in the form of direct investment by individuals and corporations (i.e., partnerships in real estate, renovation and/or business development).

An example of direct investment would be an architectural firm purchasing a historic building on the Plaza, renovating it and establishing their residential design offices there.

Another example would be an artist couple purchasing a commercial building in the Rail Road District, obtaining an *adaptive-reuse, live-work special use permit*, renovating the building and establishing their home and studios there.

Attracting this kind of outside investment will require marketing, PR and business environment incentives (limited tax breaks, historic grant assistance, service network recommendations, etc.)

Limited Economic Growth

As mentioned above, decades of economic stagnation has been a blessing in disguise for architectural preservation. But without continuous investment in proper maintenance, buildings don't last forever. We are at a crucial point in the lifespan of our architectural heritage. Our large stock of unused buildings, architecturally significant or not, are beginning to collapse. A major effort will be needed to save the remaining stock. This effort will require a huge investment of time, effort, money, engineering and construction resources, and skilled labor. This effort needs to begin immediately, before our architectural heritage crumbles before our eyes.

A city and region-wide emphasis on developing an Arts & Culture economy can address two issues simultaneously: strengthening the local economy via *economic-base business* (i.e., business that pulls in dollars from outside the region as most artists and designers tend to do); and directing our efforts towards preserving our existing underutilized architectural stock by renovating it for Arts & Culture uses. Empty commercial buildings can be strategically converted by *adaptive-reuse* into artist housing and live/work studios. Or, as is necessary, some historic homes in disrepair may be renovated and converted into galleries or small design offices. Each approach saves a home or building from certain destruction while creating a space for art, design or culture activities that contribute to the general economic well-being of the community.

Public Education

Low National Rankings / Below Average Literacy Levels

New Mexico ranks low in national educational metrics. There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is that the population of New Mexico is small and the per capita income of New Mexico residents ranks lower than the national average. However, the State generates a large amount of revenue from oil-related businesses, but has not been investing those revenues into public education. This is a problem, but it's also an opportunity. We can demand more investment in public education, but what can we do directly to improve the situation locally? There's a lot we can do that doesn't cost any money... and there's a lot we can do that generates money locally... additional revenues to invest into arts education.

In a knowledge economy, a child that doesn't learn to read is at a severe disadvantage. The good news is that it's possible to learn how to read at any age as long as the student wants to learn – even as an older adult. There are often social issues tied up in the inability to read, leading to embarrassment and a lack of willingness to even acknowledge that there is a problem.

If a student had other skills and abilities to offset the lack of reading skills, there would be less embarrassment. After all, not everyone can draw well, or sing, or play an instrument beautifully, or build a cabinet, or rebuild an engine, or create ceramics or jewelry with flair.

The Educational Challenge

As mentioned above (Strategies: 4) the skills learned from art activities have lifelong repercussions. The core skill in art making involves envisioning multiple outcomes and choosing wisely. This is also a core life skill. Additionally, art making involves discovery. This requires developing an active intelligence and acute perceptual abilities – also highly valuable for living life well.

In art, decisions are made *on purpose*, and successes are *repeatable*. Even if random or otherwise uncontrolled processes are incorporated into a work, a good artist makes it work because they are totally in control of their abilities, like an accomplished jazz player, improvising with a number of other players. Again, applied to the vicissitudes of daily life, this is a hugely valuable skill.

So, it's not surprising that Champions of Change, a compilation of research studies assembled by Americans for the Arts found that:

- Youth involvement in the arts leads to measurable improvements in reading and math.
- For children from disadvantaged backgrounds, learning various subjects “through the arts” can help “level the playing field”.
- Young people who participate in the arts for at least three hours, three days a week for at least one full year are:
 - 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement
 - 3 times more likely to be elected to positions of leadership in their schools

- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance
- 4 times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem

Exposure to a variety of art making (i.e., creative process) classes also allows people to discover their passions – hugely valuable in a world where choices can seem limited.

Also, all creative process education (including such things as jewelry making, ceramics, web design, wood shop, metal shop and even auto shop) are all about *problem solving*. Anyone with good problem solving skills can survive the curve balls that life hurls at them... They also have many choices available to them in terms of employment or business opportunities. Talented problem solvers are highly valued in the real world.

Exodus of Talent

Why the Young and Talented Leave Town

The primary reason that our graduates leave town is the perception that there are no opportunities here. With the local economy in a slump for decades, that perception is not far off the mark. However, there *are* opportunities – there is the opportunity to start an art- or design-related service or production business here and sell work elsewhere. The costs of doing business are far less here than they are, in say, Los Angeles or even Santa Fe.

- A painter or sculptor could establish a studio here and sell their work through a dealer in Santa Fe.
- A web-designer or software coder could establish a small office here and work with clients across the country – online.
- A photographer could set up a studio here and produce work for stock photo agencies in San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York.
- A children's book illustrator could set up shop here and pitch ideas to publishers in New York.
- A writer could work here, self-publish through Xlibris and sell their book through Amazon.
- A musician/composer could set up a basement recording studio, record their music and sell recordings via CD Baby or iTunes.
- A teacher could set up an office here, produce online courses and offer them through a multitude of universities and specialty schools offering distance learning courses.

The key is to help young graduates understand this... and do it. Adaptive-reuse, live-work studios, three-year tax breaks, low interest loans, micro-loans, and basic business management courses would get the ball rolling. Continuing workshops in accounting, online marketing, brand and identity design, distance education and communication skills will help raise the success ratio and keep young local entrepreneurs thriving.

Incoherent Vision

Working at Cross Purposes Creates Bad Experiences

Las Vegas has hosted many large events. It's also not uncommon that during, or after, a large event, there will be very few restaurants or cafes open. Not only is

this a wasted business opportunities for our existing businesses, it creates a bad experience for visitors and makes it less likely that they will drive in again for another event.

When people drive in an hour or two, then an hour or two back home, and they spend hours walking around, it is absolutely crucial that restaurants and cafes be open. After all, people will be hungry, thirsty, and will want to sit down and rest while they enjoy a good meal. Thinking through all the components of a coherent experience – and providing them – is crucial to creating a positive experience that people will tell their friends about later.

If people have a bad experience, they'll still go home and tell all their friends about it – how *bad* it was. This creates a negative perception, which feeds into a negative brand. All the good marketing in the world will not overcome this bad word of mouth.

A brand is simply a reputation for what is actually delivered. As a city, we have to be cognizant of how we are perceived and dedicated to consistently delivering a good experience for visitors to our town. To not do so negates all the hard work that our event organizers do to get people here in the first place.

The Need for a Shared Vision

The multitude of benefits provided by a clean Arts & Culture-based economy can be undercut if all parties in the City and County are not on the same page. There is a need for a *shared vision*. We have to agree on a fundamental level that our assets and resources are unique, irreplaceable, and worth preserving. We have to agree to use our creativity to create a vibrant economy that is non-polluting and that supports the values of the community.

The beauty of the surrounding area -- a key asset -- will be irrevocably damaged if we allow businesses into the area that pollute the environment. Damaging our key assets is a good way to subvert our efforts to create an arts-driven, culture and tourism-based economy.

A good example of this is the proposed expansion of the cement plant in the Mora Valley. Such plants generate huge amounts of diesel fumes, particulate pollution, smoke and carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide emissions. Toxic chemicals are used in the processing of the rock resulting in a future super-fund site where children once played. The air pollution (both the toxic fumes and particulates) cause lung cancer and exacerbate childhood asthma.

A similar plant in similarly beautiful Cuddy Canyon, California (in the Los Padres National Forest) did not create very many good jobs or add significantly to the economy. It hampered the recreational economy there, made residents sick, and left the once clear air dirty and stinking of diesel fumes. The plant also burns tires as fuel, emitting dioxins into the atmosphere. The economy and people of Frazier Park are certainly worse off now than they were before. All they needed to do was to build some lodges and restaurants and market the beauty of their valley to people who want to escape the smog and traffic of LA. They could have set up equestrian trails, dude ranches or a whole host of other businesses that could have leveraged the natural beauty of the area. But that opportunity is now lost. (The cement factory has paid out over \$1.5 million in settlements with federal officials over air pollution violations and reporting irregularities.)

By contrast, art, design, culture, clean light manufacturing (i.e., weaving, hand-made furniture) and technology services (i.e., programming, database development) are “industries” that:

- involve minimal real estate development;
- create minimal environmental impact (i.e., low water usage; no light, air or water pollution)
- support other local businesses
- are oriented toward “cool and unique spaces”, thus saving decaying historic buildings from certain destruction
- help cut crime with round-the-clock activity
- clean up neighborhoods by removing blight and fixing up facades
- generate local tax revenues for local school districts
- create a variety of cooperative educational opportunities
- initiate investment in local infrastructure
- create entrepreneurial opportunities
- provide a wide range of new jobs
- lessen the burden of poverty on those with fixed incomes by encouraging volunteerism and neighborhood improvement programs.

THREATS

These are issues to be avoided. Any of these issues, if unaddressed, can seriously undermine the value of working towards an arts & culture environment and diminish the quality of life for all residents.

Pollution

Air Pollution / Light Pollution

As described above, creating an Arts & Culture-driven economy requires *not doing* things that destroy the assets that an Arts & Culture economy is based upon. *People have to want to come here.* Right now, one reason people come here is because *the air is clean* and *you can see the stars*. This seems like a small thing, but it's not. Clean air is now a rarity in the United States, and despite the EPA and governmental leaders such as California's AQMD, air pollution in general keeps getting worse. Anything that causes air pollution in Las Vegas or its surrounding region will quickly diminish one of our key differentiating features.

Of course, the same is true of light pollution. There is already a Night Sky Ordinance in Las Vegas and as we move forward into an Arts & Culture economy, every effort must be made to not only comply with this ordinance, but to minimize light pollution in general. Star gazing could be integrated as a core component of our outlying evening events.

Industrial Pollution

Incoherence in the decisions made by the city and county regarding other (non-Arts & Culture) industries can also have a profound effect on the local economy. Again, being on the same page will make us all much more effective. Even industrial decisions made outside of our region can have a negative effect on our local economy and quality of life. Nuclear and toxic waste dumps, uranium mining, strip mining, tire recycling plants, coal-fired power plants and other similar heavy industrial uses of the New Mexico landscape only serve to make New Mexico less and less “The Land of Enchantment”, and more and more like any other polluted state. New Mexico gets such an extraordinary amount of

sunlight, distributed solar energy should be made the official power source for the entire state. Creative industries are more likely to lead the way in incorporating passive heating and cooling, plus solar or other alternative energy solutions into their infrastructure.

Pollute the environment and people will avoid the area.

Unplanned Growth

A Cautionary Tale: Sedona

Sedona has only recently started to pay attention to growth and sprawl issues. If one visits Sedona today, one will see houses built right up to the edge of the spectacular red bluffs. Mini-malls and ugly stucco box motels are proliferating everywhere. Sprawl is out of control. The natural beauty of Sedona has been greatly diminished and is on the verge of being utterly destroyed. Not only is this sprawl unsightly, as we have seen in recent years, Sedona is situated in the narrow Cottonwood Canyon and is very vulnerable to flooding and wild fires. From any perspective, sprawl in Cottonwood Canyon doesn't make sense, but the uncontrolled development mentality of nearby Phoenix has migrated to Sedona and nearby Prescott. This is a loss for everyone.

Another example of unplanned growth destroying the natural beauty of an area is St. George, Utah. People, once attracted to the scenic beauty of the area and its golf courses, are now confronted by massive Orange County-style development that is slowly marching up hillsides and obliterating the landscape.

Sprawl

Big Boxes, Mini-Malls and Chain Stores

Similar to Sedona, Las Vegas and its surrounding region are possessed of a number of unique natural and historic assets. Sprawl is the death of uniqueness. Big Boxes and chain stores are the same everywhere. After all, sameness is their *raison d'être*.

Los Angeles County is composed of 86 different cities. Yet, get off the freeway in nearly any city, and chances are you won't know where you are. Every city becomes more and more identical with each passing year. A few cities have managed to preserve their downtowns... now mere islands of uniqueness in a stifling blanket of conformity.

The Costs of Sprawl: Southern California

According to a recent article in the LA Times, the greater the extent of sprawl, the more it costs, per person, to maintain infrastructure as the population grows. The further out sprawl ranges, the more expensive it becomes to build and maintain the basic infrastructure of roads, water lines and electrical service, not to mention providing basic services such as schools, fire and police protection, etc.

There is no economy of scale when it comes to sprawl.

From the June 28th article, ***Tahoe Fire Shows Cost of Paradise is Still Rising:***
"In 1950, when California's population was almost 11 million, state spending per \$100 of personal income was roughly \$5, according to the state Department of Finance. In 1975, when there were about 22 million of us,

state spending amounted to \$7.50 per \$100 of income. Today, with 37 million Californians, Sacramento is spending \$9.60.”

Population growth becomes its own form of fiscal hell.

Destroying the Visual Landscape: Colorado Springs

If you exit I-25 at North Academy and heads east, up Briargate towards Lexington then loop south toward East Woodman, you will be shocked and horrified at the density of the housing developments that have completely obliterated the hills where horses once roamed. The former equestrian ranches there look vaguely like the nastier parts of a third world city from a distance – hideous swaths of thousands of rooftops devouring the landscape like a voracious cancer.

Loss of Community

Any sense of community in such towns have most likely been obliterated. When development is out of control, everyone becomes a *stranger... in a strange land*.

Loss of Character

Like Phoenix, Arizona, Ontario, California and Las Vegas, Nevada, Colorado Springs is now a completely generic version of corporate America. Every three blocks there's another Border's or B&N, every two blocks another Olive Garden or Chili's, every block another Starbucks. This is the new America, where the unique character of any town is obliterated in numbing sameness.

Showcasing our local talent, preserving our architectural legacy, and being very creative about generating economic benefit from arts, culture and design activity, and tourism, is the best way for Las Vegas to still *feel like* Las Vegas in 20 or 30 years. It is the best path to economic growth while retaining our history, culture and *authenticity*. Even Tombstone, Arizona hasn't managed to do that, having veered too far toward the Disneyfication of their historic wild-west town.

Negative Perceptions

Been to Las Vegas – Couldn't Find It

MainStreet Las Vegas recognized early on that one of the fundamental economic problems with Las Vegas is that people *can't find it*. They can get off the freeway, but roaring down Grand Avenue at highway speeds they never see the Rail Road District, Douglas Avenue, The Carnegie Library, Bridge Street, NMHU or the Plaza. For most motorists, Las Vegas simply *doesn't exist*.

This creates an extremely negative impression, but one that MainStreet is already working to change

MainStreet's current initiative, (to slow traffic on Grand with islands, crosswalks, diagonal parking and roundabouts, divert traffic into the Rail Road District and our *two* historic Downtowns, and beautify the entire route with solar street lighting, benches, trash cans, trees and plantings), will help people *discover* Las Vegas. But going well beyond that, to turn the entire MainStreet Corridor into an Arts & Culture District, will transform the energy of Las Vegas from a sleepy and

somewhat gritty town drifting through its twilight years, towards a talent-driven, dynamic arts destination.

Problematic North and South Gateways

Another perception problem when arriving in Las Vegas by highway is the north and south entrances to Grand Avenue. The first thing one sees while exiting the highway from either end is unsightly automotive junkyards. Not the best gateway for our new Arts & Culture town.

There is nothing wrong with auto junkyards – they can be a great source of parts for automotive tinkerers and restorers, and in an Arts & Culture town, for sculptors as well. A simple Arts & Culture solution would be to erect tall walls along the junkyards facing the roadway and have local art students design and paint an east and west Gateway Wall Mural for the city of Las Vegas. There could be an annual competition to design the two walls. Each year the winning walls and the young artists who created them would be photographed and documented as a part of the ongoing history of Las Vegas. Each year the wall panels would be removed and replaced. Older wall panels could find their way into sets for plays that are set in Las Vegas, or rotated periodically as large outdoor works in our monthly Las Vegas Artwalk.

This is a basic example of how to turn liabilities into assets with a little creativity. An eyesore becomes a literal “Welcome to Las Vegas” gateway at no cost to those two property owners.

Nothing to Do, Nowhere to Go

Another common negative perception (that is simple to change) is the perception that there is nothing to do, and nowhere to go in Las Vegas. Anyone who has arrived here after 5:00pm on a weekday or anytime on a Sunday knows exactly what is being described. Cafes and restaurants are closed, stores are closed, the streets are empty. As mentioned above, this is particularly problematic if there is a special event going on that day. Being hungry and thirsty and finding no place open for business makes people... angry. They'll remember it, and their bad experience will forever stick in their craw.

The simple solution is to work with café and restaurant owners to keep their establishments open later. Doing so, of course, requires additional staff, so it's a chicken-or-egg situation. An Arts & Culture environment will bring more people to openings and galleries, so more people will be on the streets looking for somewhere to eat... but this won't happen overnight. The best solution is for the entire town to focus on the evening of a monthly Artwalk, when café and restaurant owners will know that keeping their doors open will most likely pay for itself.

As more galleries, and more openings, plays, musical performances and other events occur in town, keeping your eatery open later becomes less of a risk. The bonus goes to the first movers – those enterprising souls who take the risk to become known on the street as *the* place to go when one is in town.

Where are All the Students?

Las Vegas is the college town that's not *really* a college town. Walk around town on any late afternoon, and it's rare to see even a single student out and about. Where are they? Well, to turn that question around, is there anyplace in town that

really caters to students? Can you think of another town that would ignore the potential business of 5,875 people?

In an Arts & Culture town, there would be plenty for students to do, and plenty of places to go... that were open until midnight. After all, students drink coffee and eat doughnuts or spaghetti or pizza at midnight... A high level of art events would encourage businesses to stay open later... which would in turn make Las Vegas a much more student friendly town. Galleries, cafes, bookstores, record store and hip / vintage clothing stores go together. This in turn spawns higher-end restaurants, wine bars, furniture stores and other establishments for "grown ups". All of this gives residents more freedom of choice, and more evening entertainment options.

Signs of Not Caring: Blight, Roving Dogs, Collapsing Buildings

When people visit any town, the sight of roving packs of dogs and the rubble of collapsed buildings does nothing for the town's image. Seeing such things conveys the feeling that the town does not care, or worse, does not comprehend how it comes across to others... like someone showing up at a wedding or business meeting dressed in total disarray, with their hair messed up and their pants torn.

A town serious about being perceived as an Arts & Culture destination will act on these negative impressions. The bricks from a collapsed building could be seized by the city and used to build a special walkway... or a memorial... or sold off for a dollar apiece (own a piece of our history) to raise money for a good cause... or otherwise put to creative use.

The capture of packs of roving dogs could be documented as a work of digital video art. The sad story of these abandoned dogs could be turned into a children's book... a cautionary tale regarding the importance of being responsible for animals in one's care. Some of these dogs were probably raised in a household and were recently abandoned, thus could be rehabilitated by people willing to take them in. A dog's life could be saved.

Every problem is an opportunity to get creative. In a town that values creativity, solutions will be plentiful.

Crime

Artists and designers tend to work late into the night. Having studios and businesses with their lights on and people working at 10 or 11 pm, or later, discourages crimes of opportunity. Cafes and restaurants open late have the same effect. Buildings that are kept up, and kept clean, attract less vandalism.

More importantly arts and culture businesses create jobs at all wage and skill levels. Working in a small business (as opposed to a large plant or corporation) gives one the chance to experience a wide range of responsibilities in a short amount of time, and to learn a wide range of job skills. Being employed, and having a wider range of skills to leverage should one ever become unemployed, is key to starting out life on the right foot.

It is a well-known fact that high employment and high dropout rates correlate with high crime rates. Comprehensive arts education can inspire students to stay in school and thus avoid the discouraging experience of serial unemployment that often accompanies dropping out.

Solid creative process skills (visualizing, planning, designing, building, refining, optimizing, and developing repeatable processes) enables one to overcome a wide range of problems that could easily derail a person possessing little of those skills. Having access to a full range of arts education opportunities and learning creative problem solving early in life correlates with much higher educational achievement plus lifelong success and fulfillment.

OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding the Local Talent Base

Making Las Vegas into a True College Town

Currently, as mentioned above, ***the town turns its back on its students***, so, as one would expect, ***its students reject the town upon graduation***.

Our colleges are a vast untapped resource for Las Vegas. A deep reservoir of talent, knowledge, training, cultural interchange and entrepreneurial energy are simply leaving town every day. Let us not mince words – ***it is a tragedy for Las Vegas that these resources are currently being lost***. *It is also a tragedy for students to attend college in a town that makes little effort to recognize their existence, much less provide a welcoming environment.*

We have an opportunity to transform Las Vegas into a true college town. Not just a place where students can feel comfortable hanging out in cyber-cafes eating pizza at midnight, but a place where *graduates feel empowered to start careers and establish businesses here.*

It is the responsibility of the colleges to educate their students, but it is also our responsibility to convey crucial information to our students. They need to know, and we need to demonstrate, that launching a career or business here, today, will provide them with a competitive advantage that they would not have elsewhere. We need to let our students know that we acknowledge the value that they bring to the picture, and that we are committed to not only help them launch their futures here but will provide the tools and ongoing resources that will help sustain their ventures and increase their chances of success.

Retaining our Graduates as a Part of Our Community

It is a priority to address this wasteful historic disconnect, and build strong links between downtown Las Vegas revitalization efforts and our three local colleges.

A vibrant Arts & Culture District will provide a stimulating and inspiring environment for students, plus venues to showcase their work. Effective programs in Talent Development, Economic Assistance, Infrastructure Development and Coherent Marketing will help retain the talent and brainpower that our colleges are nurturing, *here in town*.

Increasing Awareness and Discussion of Problems

Media Coverage

We have started to see increasing media coverage of local problems. Shedding light on local issues is key to constructive debate and problem solving.

There is an opportunity to address pressing issues via our talent base. One option is to have local graphic designers create *information graphics* that can be used by city agencies or local newspapers to help describe a problem in detail or convey the extent of a problem. This may take the form of maps, line charts, bar charts, pie charts, etc.

The second option is to invite creative professionals from a variety of disciplines to participate directly in solution brainstorming and problem solving. Creative professionals can bring a fresh perspective to issues that may appear daunting from a bureaucratic viewpoint. Many times, solutions to problems become apparent simply by changing one's point-of-view. As mentioned above, artists and designers are used to envisioning many outcomes and choosing wisely.

Every problem is an opportunity to get creative.

Community Forums

Community forums, in the form of moderated email lists, online discussion boards, or live meetings have tremendous value in generating lots of ideas for solving problems. They generate a lot of complaints and general griping, but filtering through that reveals many real gems. Any discussion raises awareness of issues... multiple viewpoints reveal the complexity of issues. Again, in a community that values discussion and creative thinking, there will be no shortage of solutions.

Turning Mud and Straw into Adobe

Transform Negative Perceptions into Positive Perceptions

Working with City and County officials we can eliminate the sources of negative perceptions and accentuate positive perceptions of Las Vegas. Additional dollars flowing into the City coffers through increased business activity will help fund additional police, fire, animal control and code enforcement personnel and will help raise the general level of City services across the board.

Micro-loans and low-interest loans will help fund property owners repair building facades, leaking roofs and restore weathered signage.

Efforts by organizations like MainStreet Las Vegas, supported by grants, loans and volunteer effort will help slow traffic, beautify streetscapes, repair and paint city landmarks, and raise money for special projects.

Coordinated efforts by groups like the CCHP and MainStreet will help save buildings in a serious state of disrepair and convert them to arts and culture uses.

Coordinate Our Efforts for the Common Good

Area businesses, organizations and City services can be coordinated to create great experiences for visitors, plus more shopping, entertainment and service choices for area residents. These enhanced choices and experiences will in turn benefit area businesses with a higher level of economic activity across the board.

Enhance the Quality of Life for Everyone

Coordinating extensive educational programs between our three colleges and area artists will create new opportunities for the children of Las Vegas, help retain our graduates and nurture business start ups and preservation projects. These combined activities will raise overall academic performance in our schools, elevate general educational levels across the community and inspire broad-based community volunteerism, fostering an active, results-oriented approach to life. People helping people elevates the quality of life for all.

See Las Vegas as We've Never Seen It Before

Las Vegas has actually been described recently as a “gritty little town”. We have an opportunity to see Las Vegas as something more than that – as a unique small city with deep historic roots, blessed with beautiful natural surroundings and powered by dynamic, creative citizens who wake up every morning to roll up their sleeves and actively build the best city they can possibly imagine.

Create a Great Experience for Visitors

The economy of Las Vegas can be driven by art & culture dollars pouring into town from the rest of the country – and the world. This happens via a combination of outbound sales of art works and craft goods designed and produced here, as well as by attracting cultural tourism.

The core imperative of tourism in any form is to create – and consistently deliver – a welcoming and memorable experience for visitors to our community. Positive experiences create happy memories and positive word-of-mouth. The results are far more compelling than any marketing campaign can be.

Enhance the Unique Character of Las Vegas

Call Attention to Overlapping Histories

As mentioned earlier in this document, Las Vegas and its region is the beneficiary of the complex overlapping histories of native peoples, explorers, pioneers, merchants, railroad workers, gold seekers, wanderers, travelers, and urban expatriates. Each wave of human activity has left its trails, its architecture, its families and its legends and lore. We have an opportunity to not only keep these histories alive for historians but to bring these histories alive for every visitor and every resident – through music, storytelling, historic theater, literature, poetry, photography, painting and interactive media.

Create a Unique Brand and Back It Up

As mentioned earlier, a “Brand” is a vision of what one’s reputation should be. One’s actual reputation over time is one’s *real* brand.

Creating a brand requires identifying attributes that one wants to be associated with. Propagating a brand involves not just taking-the-talk but walking-the-walk (i.e., *consistently* delivering on those attributes).

If a town wants to have *clean* as one of its brand attributes, it cannot tolerate graffiti or piles of trash along its roadways. If a town wants to have *creative* as one of its brand attributes, then *creative approaches* need to be incorporated into its civic dialog and problem solving.

Because brands are reputation-based, one has to back up that reputation with action, not words. This is a classically *Western* concept. We are a *Western town*.

Rising Santa Fe Real Estate Values

Commercial Development Pushes Artists Out

We are not Santa Fe, and we don't want to become a "mini-me" version of Santa Fe. But we can benefit from mistakes made by Santa Fe and other cities. Sprawling commercial development is driving Santa Fe artists out of their studios and out of the city. They are ending up in studios all over the surrounding countryside. Some end up in Las Vegas.

Sante Fe Artists on the Move

The cost of owning a building or a studio in Las Vegas is much lower than a comparable space in Santa Fe. It is crucial for an "arts community" to include working artists. As art cities become more expensive, artists leave and re-establish themselves elsewhere. This has happened in former art communities like Manhattan where the artists have fled rising real estate costs. Is Santa Fe heading in the same direction?

Towns like Carmel, California were never truly art communities in the first place, despite the plethora of galleries there (Carmel recently passed a new ordinance limiting new galleries – visitors were complaining that there weren't enough places to eat in town). Carmel is a town of multi-millionaires – it's simply too expensive for artists to live there, so it lacks any kind of a vital "art scene".

Las Vegas has a rare opportunity to position itself as a bona-fide arts community – one that values creativity, is affordable and is measurably artist-friendly. The vitality that will be created by consciously putting the elements into place that are needed to build and sustain a creative community will pay for itself many times over, both economically and in terms of quality of life for all of our citizens.

New Mexico is Already Perceived as a Cultural Destination

According to Paul Narbutas of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, "New Mexico is very much perceived as a cultural destination." Statewide, the culture industry in the state generated more than \$2.8 billion in direct economic impact in 2005. \$1.3 billion of that is spent on arts and culture industry expenses. The remaining \$1.5 billion is spent by tourists on cultural activities and related services like restaurants and hotels.

As reported in the Las Vegas Optic, dated 11-27-06, the state's culture industry employed at least 43,000 people in 2005, eclipsing manufacturing, which employs 38,000 workers in New Mexico.

What does this mean for Las Vegas? It means we have a head start in making our city into a cultural destination. We're not located in North Dakota or Arkansas – we're located in a state already well known for its natural beauty and cultural significance. Consider two things:

- The knowledge, experience and expertise to accomplish what we need to do *already exists in our backyard*.

- People travel to Santa Fe from all over the world specifically to buy art, particularly hand-crafted work. Santa Fe is only 45 minutes away from Las Vegas. Can we entice some of those visitors to take a short side trip to visit Las Vegas? Yes, we can.

A Coherent Vision

Leverage Assets and Resources

We have an opportunity to intelligently leverage our assets and resources to elevate our town without ruining it. Every decision made will either take us toward our goal or away from it.

If we can collectively agree, and publicly declare, that we value:

1. our environment
2. our educational resources, both institutional and individual
3. creative approaches to solving problems
4. non-polluting economic-base business
5. the talent of our students and graduates
6. artistic drive and talent
7. arts & cultural tourism

...we can create a future that will truly be amazing. Las Vegas will lead by example.

Orchestrate Action

Implementing this Strategic Plan will require the coordinated efforts of many organizations, governmental bodies and individuals. Having an unambiguous shared vision will help us identify opportunities and fulfill our objectives in a timely and effective manner. Every individual, organization and government agency has specific skills and resources to contribute to the achievement of our vision.

Guided Implementation

The strategic guidance of tactical initiatives is crucial to our success in transforming Las Vegas into a nationally recognized Arts & Culture community.

The Strategic Plan itself has mechanisms to help identify opportunities, prioritize activities and guide the implementation of specific projects. It's important to be efficient with our brainpower and energies, and strive for *effective* outcomes. Every project should be a key piece of the puzzle. Anything that isn't takes us away from our goals.

The primary tactical (program and project-based) initiatives can be grouped into categories, prioritized and guided on a day-by-day, decision-by-decision basis to keep our work on track. Progress can be tracked against a coordinated timeline. Achievements can be measured against a pre-determined set of metrics.

We have everything we need to accomplish the vision, mission and goals outlined in this document. We just need to get going.

Section 3

A Tactical Roadmap: Getting There – On Schedule

This section details the tactical threads that will be woven into a strong and beautiful community tapestry.

Some of these tactical initiatives are ongoing programs that, once started, will continue indefinitely. Some are projects, with a definite beginning, middle and end. Some of these programs or projects are already in existence, but need to be integrated into, and supported by, the overall Strategic Plan.

Also, many of these initiatives are interdependent – meaning that they are contingent upon the implementation or completion of others. Thus, we need to prioritize, schedule and coordinate these activities and projects from the very beginning.

The Tactical Roadmap consists of five interrelated components:

- **Talent Development**

Identify, attract and nurture both local and incoming talent

- **Economic Assistance**

Emphasize arts & culture entrepreneurialism and business growth

- **Infrastructure Development**

Provide affordable physical and digital infrastructure to the creative community

- **Community Coordination**

Coordinate community resources to optimize benefits for all

- **Coherent Marketing**

Consistently market Las Vegas in a positive, creative and comprehensive manner

Talent Development

- Support existing talent with training and marketing
 - *Help local arts professionals establish themselves and grow through comprehensive business training and cooperative marketing*
- Develop up-and-coming talent
 - *Identify young artists and craftspeople and provide them with special educational and business opportunities*

- Attract new talent
 - *Artists are always looking for the ideal place to work... let them know we are committed to providing the optimal arts & culture environment*
- Develop a comprehensive Arts Education programs
 - *Augment the arts programs offered by our public schools and colleges with the expertise and experience of our local artists and craftspeople*
- Initiate Art Mentorships
 - *In coordination with our colleges, develop and offer comprehensive, accredited arts mentorship programs, including studio internships.*
- Develop educational Studio Tours
 - *Work with local studio artists and craftspeople to incorporate local educational studio tours into our high school and college arts programs*
- Plan and host open and curated Group Shows
 - *Regular open group shows provide local artists exposure... regular curated shows provide our artists recognition*
- Organize regularly recurring Student Shows
 - *Student shows of top talent chosen by instructors at our local high-schools and colleges, hosted in the Arts & Culture District during monthly Artwalks provide recognition for young talent*
- Host a monthly Arts & Culture District Artwalk
 - *A regular Las Vegas Arts & Culture District Artwalk called **Second Saturdays** hosted on the second Saturday of every month (including mounting temporary shows in the ground floor spaces and display windows of empty buildings)*
- Produce Symposia, Workshops and Panel Discussions
 - *Support the development of arts and design symposia, workshops and panel discussions hosted by our local colleges and working art studios*
- Offer Quarterly Public Studio Tours
 - *LVAC is already doing this, but this could occur quarterly: Las Vegas Fall Open Studio Tour, etc.*
- Creation of a county-wide arts “4-H”-like program for high-school students
 - *An annual comprehensive arts showcase and competition for high-school students in a wide variety of disciplines – sponsored by local businesses*
- Design separate “starter” programs for Artists, Musicians, Theatrical Producers and Artists, Architects, Web Designers, Graphic Designers, Digital Filmmakers

- *A starter program would include assistance with finding studio space, getting involved in monthly Artwalks and quarterly Studio Tours, meeting other local artists, designers, writers, etc.,*

Economic Assistance

- Develop entrepreneurial training programs
 - *Provide artists, musicians, designers, etc., with regularly-scheduled training by local experts in how to start and operate a business in Las Vegas.*
- Offer start-ups comprehensive business and professional support services
 - *Offer initial free, and limited-period discounted professional support services (accounting system set-up, basic legal advice, basic tax information, etc.)*
- Offer low-interest loans and micro-loans
 - *Develop a community bank to offer entrepreneurs and property owners low-interest and business start-up micro-loans*
- Offer ongoing business support networking
 - *Make sure growing businesses are connected with the continuing support they need to thrive (i.e., accounting, legal, marketing)*
- Develop a constantly evolving networking database
 - *This database would include artists and craftspeople in every category, gallerists, business services, community organization contacts, etc.*
- Host meetings, mixers, presentations
 - *Host a variety of community networking and professional development events for creative professionals*
- Develop an enterprise-zone style / general business environment
 - *Goals: art / media related business license fees waived for three years; emphasis on arts, culture, multimedia, educational, technology and intellectual property-generating business*
- Attract and retain talent with economic incentives
 - *Assure a supply of low cost studio space, low cost co-op exhibition space, low-cost co-op marketing programs (i.e, regular full page Las Vegas ads in The Magazine, Pasatiempo, New Mexico Magazine, The Santa Fean, Santa Fe Trends, and local and regional newspapers (The Optic, The Las Vegas Times)*
 - *Provide low-cost PR services for openings, performances, workshops and other events and recognitions*

Infrastructure Development

- Develop physical Infrastructure
 - *Initiate adaptive-reuse building renovations to create residential artist lofts*

- *Invest in the development of individual and co-op art studios*
- *Encourage the launch of more galleries*
- *Set aside spaces for community sculpture gardens – and fund them*
- *Fund public art*
- *Develop and encourage the private development of alternative concert venues*
- *Fund workshop venues (offset the costs of hosting workshops, symposia, etc.)*
- *Work with property owners to make windows available for art window displays*
- Expand digital infrastructure
 - *Work with Quest to provide extensive broadband access*
 - *Implement citywide wireless access*
 - *Fund cutting-edge public media arts programming*
 - *Purchase, install and operate strategically-located digital displays*
- Augment educational infrastructure
 - *Purchase, install and manage web conferencing tools and software*
 - *Fund community media labs, digital printmaking labs, silk-screening shops, etc.*

Community Coordination

- Involve and coordinate:
 - *Businesses that directly benefit (cafes, restaurants, galleries)*
 - *Arts support businesses (supplies, digital printing, recording studios, framers)*
 - *Business services (banks, real estate, professional services, etc.)*
 - *Service organizations (Rotary Kiwanis, Key Club, Church Groups, etc.)*
 - *Community organizations (MainStreet, EDC, CofC, LVAC, etc.)*
 - *Neighborhood groups (Neighborhood Watch, Las Vegas CATS, Historic Streets)*
 - *Volunteers (events, shows, openings, guides, etc.)*

Coherent Marketing

- Develop the Brand
 - *Develop a very strong brand for Las Vegas as an Arts Community and Destination*

- *Build the brand one step at a time (continuous guidance and constant evaluation of evolving reputation)*
- *Propagate the brand via multiple channels (print, television, online, etc.)*
- *Design and build a stunning Las Vegas Arts & Culture website*
- Implement Coherent Communications
 - *Craft messaging*
 - *Coordinate all communications and PR for consistency*
 - *Develop community-wide cooperative marketing programs*
 - *Develop and fund city event marketing programs*
- Manage a Comprehensive Arts and Public Event Calendar
 - *Build and operate a comprehensive, detailed and accurate online events calendar*
 - *Build an open, interactive calendar content management system for updates*
- Build an Accurate Contact Database
 - *Allow artists, businesses, organizations and event organizers to self-update their contact information as needed*
- Track Feedback
 - *Implement and track online feedback on the Las Vegas Arts & Culture website*

Section 4

Summary:

What Is Imagined Can Be Achieved

What is actively visualized can be achieved. In fact, this is the only way to achieve anything that is complex or difficult.

Having a clear vision of the future allows for effective planning and guided implementation. It allows for the creation of logical benchmarks to evaluate progress. Without vision, life “happens”.

Great achievements don’t happen by accident.

Every city has artists living and working within its boundaries. Yet, the vast majority of cities are not seen as art cities. It’s easy to forget that Santa Fe was not always an internationally recognized “arts city”. Nor was Taos. At one time even New York City was not even recognized as the arts capital of the world. In each case, by intent or by accident of fate, each city was transformed in the eyes of people everywhere into something special.

Las Vegas has everything it needs to begin the work of transforming itself into a vibrant Arts Community and Cultural Destination.

Las Vegas is already a National Treasure... we just need to consciously recognize that fact and publicly commit to make every effort to preserve and extend the natural and historic assets and resources we are already blessed with.

Publicly committing to make this effort puts our personal reputation on the line. But it is important to remember that a town, or a city, in and of itself, cannot have a “reputation”. Las Vegas, like any city, is the composite of the vision, skills, knowledge, expertise, character and courage of its citizens, nothing more. The landscape exists. Cities, nations and even empires come and go. It’s up to us, the citizens of Las Vegas to make this city into what we collectively envision it can become in this next phase of its existence.

Every morning when we awake, and we contribute our fair share to the process of reinvigorating this town -- one project at a time -- we move Las Vegas a little closer toward our vision: a small, unique, historic city, recognized worldwide as the National Treasure that it is.

We can achieve this.

Time to get to work...



Las Vegas MainStreet ARTS and CULTURAL DISTRICT RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT

Conducted April 7 - 10, 2008

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the passage of the New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Act in 2007, the time was right for providing communities with a framework for broadening economic development through arts and culture. A fast growing movement was underway nationally and globally to examine how arts and culture affect rural and urban economies. Recognizing the state's rich cultural heritage, New Mexico MainStreet had been working on developing an Arts and Cultural District initiative since 2005. Las Vegas was selected as one of two pilot program Arts and Cultural Districts for New Mexico for several reasons including its long history of cultivating artists in the traditional arts and because of its uniqueness as a small town to enjoy three exceptional higher education institutions, all of which are supportive of local arts, culture and a thriving historic downtown.

During a three day visit in April 2008, a team made up of professionals from throughout the state and nationally with expertise on successful downtown arts and cultural development practices was assigned to the project to provide an on-site assessment. They conducted numerous interviews with a broad spectrum of residents and researched issues to ultimately develop final recommendations. These recommendations are categorized into four areas: cultural planning, marketing and promotions, physical planning and design, and capacity building and finance. A preliminary public presentation was given to the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee at the conclusion of the visit.

During the presentations, each group highlighted local assets. Some of these included an abundance of historically significant architecture, an established traditional arts community, three higher education institutions, and a growing awareness that Las Vegas has the potential to become a thriving, culturally rich town. Some of the observations of the report include a need for providing business skills to artists to help them become sustainable entrepreneurs; a comprehensive and consistent marketing plan to promote Las Vegas; more hotel and motel rooms downtown; and a question by the Resource Team about the A&C District boundary submitted in the application being too large to maintain walkability, synergy and effectiveness.

Complimenting the findings of each group are a series of recommendations, most categorized as short or long term that could be accomplished in the next 18 to 24 months. For example, the Las Vegas Arts Council should strengthen the role it has in the community by developing a steady stream of income to support paid staff; implement effective website enhancements to help distinguish our Las Vegas from the Nevada city on website browsers; and create a wayfinding system to easily draw visitors from Grand Avenue to the Old Town area.

Cultural economic development is one of many tools for creating jobs and bettering the community as a whole. Cultural economic development is most effective when partnered with a responsive local government, a broad spectrum of committed residents, and a vision for keeping the flavor of what makes Las Vegas special. It's a

reflection of the entire community. The Arts & Cultural District may be located in Downtown, but the success of the new District and the ripple effect to all of Las Vegas will be dependent on the support of all residents.

NEW MEXICO AND THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

Within the past decade, the rapid acceleration of multimedia technology and the global deployment of the internet have enabled the revitalization and transformation of many downtown commercial districts and neighborhoods as cultural districts. While the phenomenon of artists or bohemian enclaves has ancient roots, only recently have public policies and development incentives been crafted to encourage the growth of cultural economic development in local communities worldwide.

New Mexico boasts the longest continuous culture-based economy in the United States. While many people are familiar with the arts and crafts traditions of the Pueblos, Navajos and Apaches, other Hispanic and Anglo creative expressions also maintain rich legacies. Because of New Mexico's geographic isolation, these creative traditions were preserved and maintained high levels of artistic integrity and craftsmanship that continue to influence contemporary artists.

New Mexico began to attract the interest of progressive modern artists beginning with the development of the Taos and Santa Fe artists' colonies over a century ago. The pervasive influence of these artists yielded significant innovations in architecture and urban design such as the re-interpretation of the state's architecture as the Pueblo Revival style and also the creation by city ordinance of the Canyon Road arts district, one of the earliest and most successful in America. Taos and Santa Fe also attracted generations of cultural entrepreneurs who created businesses and institutions such as the School of American Research, the Santa Fe Indian Market, and the Harwood Foundation that have flourished over time and become cultural and economic anchors for the region.

Other major developments in New Mexico in the Twentieth Century have contributed to the expansion of the cultural economy. These include the establishment of two National Scientific Laboratories at Los Alamos and Sandia in Albuquerque; the growth of an alpine skiing industry; the emergence of the Santa Fe Opera; a robust movie industry and other achievements.

By 2000, New Mexico was well-positioned to expand its cultural economic development to rural communities.

What is the Creative Economy?

Recently, numerous pundits and economic forecasters have predicted the rise of the Creative Economy in a rapidly interconnecting global marketplace. Among the first to describe the needs and attributes of the new knowledge workers, management guru Peter Drucker, in his 1993 book Post-Capitalist Society, predicted the fundamental

importance of knowledge and information, rather than labor, capital or resources, to the creation of wealth and prosperity in a digital age. Subsequent studies, including Richard Florida's The Rise of the Creative Class, have confirmed the critical importance of knowledge workers and their particular needs.

Rather than confirming a narrow artist's definition of the creative class, Dr. Florida suggests broad definitions of a super-creative core and also a group of creative professionals that together comprise the creative class. These major occupational categories are listed below.

Super-Creative Core Occupations

- Computer and mathematical
- Architecture and engineering
- Life, physical, and social science
- Education, training, and library
- Arts, design, entertainment, sports and media

Creative Professional Occupations

- Management
- Business and financial operations
- Legal
- Health care practitioners and technical
- High-end sales and sales management

NEW MEXICO'S INTERAGENCY ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT INITIATIVE

Despite the recent successes and growth of Santa Fe, Taos, Albuquerque and Las Cruces, many communities in New Mexico struggled during the past few decades. The State Legislature adopted the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program in 1985 as a strategy to address the economic decline of rural towns. Las Vegas, Las Vegas, Socorro, Raton, and Gallup were selected as the five original MainStreet cities. Las Vegas joins Silver City as a pilot New Mexico Arts and Cultural District.

New Mexico MainStreet began developing an Arts and Cultural District initiative in 2005. Presentations outlining the concept were made to the MainStreet community and officials of the Economic Development Department. During this time, many popular economic and popular culture books appeared which gave legitimacy to the cultural economic development movement and urged communities to prepare for a paradigm shift. In addition, Santa Fe and Albuquerque commissioned economic analyses of their cultural economies, and the Department of Cultural Affairs assessed the size of New Mexico's creative enterprise industry in 2004.

In the 2007 Legislative session, the New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Act was passed and signed into law by Governor Bill Richardson. The enabling legislation outlined a process by which communities could apply for a state designated district approved by the New Mexico Arts Commission. Incentives were offered to municipalities and private property owners. The State MainStreet Director (presently Rich Williams) was designated as the state Arts and Cultural Districts Coordinator. Other state agencies such as New Mexico Arts, the Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Tourism and the Scenic Byways program have joined forces to implement the program. Other important partners in the Arts and Cultural Districts program include the Museum of New Mexico Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation, and the Women's Economic Self Sufficiency Team Corporation (WESSTCorp).

Las Vegas and Silver City Shine

The Fall Quarterly MainStreet meeting was a warm-up for the application process for the Arts and Cultural Districts designations, which were announced in January 2008. Silver City and Las Vegas submitted the highest ranked applications and were designated New Mexico's two pilot Arts and Cultural Districts.

Silver City's eminence as a growing center for creative economic development is enhanced by surging clusters of visual artists, musicians, performing artists and also cultural entrepreneurs. Silver City's location and proximity to Mexico, Arizona and California offer unique themes and opportunities for creative enterprises.

As a counterpoint to Silver City, Las Vegas boasts strong and deep cultural roots which suggest themes of historic and cultural preservation. Las Vegas' geographic proximity to nationally recognized arts communities in Santa Fe and Taos offers heritage tourism and marketing opportunities as well as the challenges of gentrification and economic dislocation.

OVERVIEW OF LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas' critical location on the eastern Front Range of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northeastern New Mexico determined its rise to power and prosperity in the Nineteenth Century. Founded in 1835, the plaza and tiny Hispanic village grew quickly by exploiting the wagon caravans of the Santa Fe Trail trade (1821-79). In 1879, the Santa Fe Railroad steamed into the flatlands one mile east of the plaza, creating a new town and one of the Southwest's legendary boomtowns. By 1930, the spectacular gilded age of Las Vegas had been eclipsed, as its once vast trade area was sharply diminished by competing rail lines.

The legacy of these historical and economic forces is complex. Las Vegas' population of 15,000 people has been stable but stagnant since 1900. The community boasts New Mexico's greatest inventory of historic Victorian era architecture - over 900 buildings and nine historic districts on the state and national registers. Always known as a

center for education and higher learning, the community's strength and major payrolls are generated by New Mexico Highlands University, Luna Community College, and Armand Hammer United World College of the American West.



Similar to Albuquerque, the railroad economic boom in Las Vegas created a new town alongside an established plaza-based Hispanic community (known in both communities as "Old Town"). Cultural and economic conflicts in both cities are often traced back to the railroad era. More recently, the unifying themes of arts and culture, also known as the creative economy, are perceived as strategies to help unify the diverse population of Las Vegas as well as provide economic opportunities for many.

Las Vegas was selected as one of New Mexico's original five MainStreet cities in 1986. In contrast to Silver City, Las Vegas has struggled to sustain a successful MainStreet program. The current certified Las Vegas MainStreet is the third incarnation, and perhaps the most effective. The challenge of revitalizing three historic commercial districts, including Plaza/Bridge Street, Douglas Avenue/Sixth Street, and the Railroad District, is a daunting task.

Maybe the most compelling factor in the potential success of a new Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas is the emergence of capable leadership in key community positions, including city government, educational institutions, and financial partners, as well as non-profit developers such as Las Vegas MainStreet, the Las Vegas Arts Council, and the Las Vegas Economic Development Corporation.

A new spirit of cooperation and partnership is emerging in Las Vegas, and the present political and economic climate seems opportune for the new Arts and Cultural district initiative.

PROCESS

The New Mexico MainStreet Program is the statewide program housed in the New Mexico Economic Development Department for the past 23 years that assists

communities engaged in Downtown revitalization through historic preservation and asset development. The New Mexico Arts and Cultural District Program was established in 2007 by the State Legislature and Governor Bill Richardson to develop a market niche downtown in place-based economic development using the state's rich heritage and cultural entrepreneurs in arts and culture.

The New Mexico MainStreet Program Director was named the State Coordinator of New Mexico's Arts and Cultural Districts with the New Mexico Arts Commission the authorizing body. Based on the State Coordinator's recommendations from each applicant community, and as funds are made available to open enrollment, Districts are authorized by the Commission.

This initiative is both an Inter-Departmental and state-wide organizational effort with initial participants from the New Mexico Department of Tourism, The New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs (Divisions of New Mexico Arts and Historic Preservation), and the New Mexico Economic Development Department's MainStreet Program, the McCune Charitable Foundation and the New Mexico Museum Foundation. Other agencies and institutions are being added as expertise from their area of service is identified.

Resource Team Visit

A Resource Team was assembled consisting of approximately fifteen professionals in the fields of MainStreet, arts, culture, tourism, historic preservation, planning, and urban design and were led by the New Mexico MainStreet Director. The Resource Team was divided into four groups with specific focus:

Resource Team and Break-out Groups

Cultural Planning

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Regina Chavez | NM MainStreet Cultural Planner |
| Loie Fecteau | NM Arts, Executive Director |
| Andrew Vick | Allegany Arts Council, Maryland |
| Ann Weisman | NM Arts |

Marketing and Promotion

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|
| John Stafford | Museum of NM Foundation |
| Maggie Macnab | Macnab Design |
| Laurie Frantz | NM Tourism Dept, Scenic Byways |

Physical Planning and Design

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Charlie Deans | NM MainStreet Urban Planner |
| William Powell | NM MainStreet Design Architect |
| Scott Day | Urban Design Services |
| Harvey Kaplan | NM Tourism Dept, Historic Preservation |

Capacity Building and Finance

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Rich Williams | NM MainStreet Director, State Arts & Cultural District Coordinator |
| Elmo Baca | NM MainStreet Special Projects |
| Jeff Mitchell | UNM BBER, Senior Research Scientist |
| Cary Tyson | Arkansas MainStreet Director |

These statewide and national specialists were chosen specific to the needs of Las Vegas's Arts and Cultural District and were provided with background materials in advance of their on-site visit. They assembled in Las Vegas the week of April 7 - 10, 2008 to gather information and insight about Las Vegas's strengths and challenges, as well as to inventory resources within the community.

During this brief community visit, the Resource Team was not tasked with developing a plan that addresses all issues within the District. Instead they were directed to focus on suggestions that could be implemented in the next 18-24 months, thus giving the Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee a basis for developing long term and sustainable cultural planning strategies. As noted above, the Resource Team was divided into four break-out groups: Cultural Planning, Marketing and Promotion, Physical Planning and Design, and Capacity Building and Finance.



The Resource Team was tasked with providing the community and the A&CD Steering Council with expertise, experience and insight on successful downtown arts and cultural development practices around the country. Each break-out group met with a variety of community leaders, merchants, artists, artisans, cultural entrepreneurs, educators, the hospitality industry and a wide array of other stakeholders and non-profit organizations to find out what were some of the assets,

issues and resources in the newly designated District. Following the group interviews, the break-out groups also met as a full Team to debrief, share common themes, brainstorm and craft final recommendations into a comprehensive vision for the A&CD Steering Council.

On the last day of the site visit, each of the four break-out groups presented their initial findings plus short and long term recommendations to the Arts and Cultural District Steering Council and interested community members. This report carries more detail than the public presentation and constitutes the final written assessment report to the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Steering Council.

The Resource Team would like to thank our community hosts, Cindy Collins of Las Vegas MainStreet, Roy Montibon of the Las Vegas A&CD Steering Council and their team of volunteers for all their efforts, warm hospitality and arrangements that kept

us on track with what we set out to do. The Resource Team would also like to thank the Plaza Hotel for providing meeting rooms and generous hospitality during the visit. Las Vegas is a beautiful community and Cindy, Roy and many volunteers made our experience that much more enjoyable.

INTRODUCTION

The designation of downtown Las Vegas as one of the two pilot Arts and Cultural Districts is the opening of a conversation in the community. We are partners in this new process but also your guests. Congratulations to your community for growing cross-collaborations between organizations evident in your application for the Arts and Cultural District designation. The application process provided a self assessment; the Resource Team provided an outside perspective. This beginning of a community conversation on Las Vegas' Arts and Cultural District raises questions:

- What does the authorization mean?
- How can it assist the community?
- What role does the community have in shaping the District?
- What does this mean for our artists?
- What are the opportunities for developing the "Creative Economy"?

The Resource Team included some very special guests from out of state (Andy Vick and Cary Tyson) working in their communities to develop and define the role of the Cultural Economy for their districts. Their experiences and professional expertise added to the in-state Team. The Resource Team held back-to-back meetings with over 100 people over two very intense days. The Team heard many concerns, issues, hopes, dreams, and opportunities. Several themes began to emerge from these meetings in the areas we were exploring with you and across the four breakout groups that occurred in Cultural Planning, Marketing and Promotion, Physical Design and Planning, and Capacity Building and Finance.

These themes could be characterized as the four "Cs" and begin to reflect values that are important to the Las Vegas community:

- Communication
- Coordination
- Collaboration
- Community

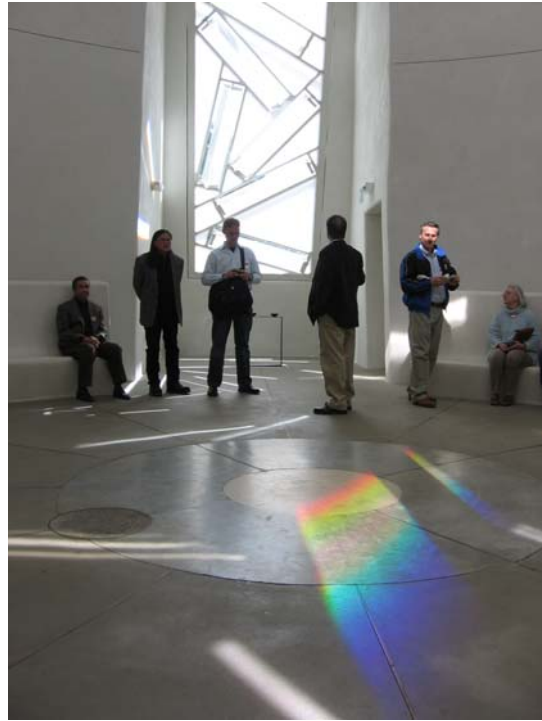
Communication

- Community of Las Vegas wants stronger and consistent ways to understand and learn about the efforts under way
- Communication needs to happen between organizations as well as throughout the community

- Communication needs to be transparent, open, clear and inclusive

Coordination

- Community of Las Vegas wants to see better leveraging of each other's resources and knowledge, resulting in less redundancy with limited and sometimes scarce resources both in terms of staff and funding
- Organizations need to work more closely together to define roles and responsibilities to achieve successful projects without concern for who gets the credit



Collaboration

- All have a role in enhancing the community's wealth, not just money in the cash register but the quality of life in the community
- That efforts be community based and responsive to the community's needs
- Coordinating efforts together can increase the social capital to the benefit of the entire community
- The benefits of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District benefit the entire community of Las Vegas' health and well-being as well as the artists, crafts people and cultural entrepreneurs

Community

- The new Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District maintains the integrity of Las Vegas' unique heritage and culture
- The Arts and Cultural District makes sure that space in its cultural institutions provides for a voice for all community members
- Las Vegas' Arts and Cultural District reflects the values of the community and the diversity of expression
- The District continues to serve the diverse needs of the community through its existing retail and services and not become homogenous as it develops the Arts and Cultural aspects of the District

Next Steps

These recommendations should be reviewed by the Las Vegas A&CD Steering Committee and become the basis for the community's first two-year work plan. They should lead to planning, and development of a municipal ordinance establishing the boundaries and purposes of the District, municipal adoption and implementation of a District Master Plan with the assistance of the MainStreet Program Associate in Urban Design for Infrastructure and Capital Investments. With technical assistance from the MainStreet Program Associates in Cultural Planning, Special Projects and Urban Design as well as staff from the New Mexico Arts Division and the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Tourism Department and the New Mexico Museum Foundation, your community is now ready to create a downtown Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan that ties to the Master Plan, and can be adopted by the municipality by the end of the second year of authorization.

Following are the findings and recommendations of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Resource Team presented in the four break-out group categories: Cultural Planning, Marketing and Promotion, Physical Planning and Design, and Capacity Building and Finance. Although each group varied somewhat in their presentation format, they remained consistent with providing recommendations.

CULTURAL PLANNING


Strengths

- Las Vegas is rich in artistic traditions and local artwork reflects a wonderful sense of place.
- There is a long history of arts events with wide community support such as the People's Faire.
- Las Vegas serves as a hub for neighboring villages and artisans.
- The Plaza serves as a natural gathering place for residents and visitors.
- Las Vegasans are friendly and welcoming.
- Natural beauty abounds with clean air, water and lush scenery.



- The local Arts Council continues to survive despite recent challenges.

Observations

- Community arts events calendar does not consistently reach all audiences and does not contain a comprehensive listing of all arts and cultural events in the area.
 - There are misperceptions about the process of developing the Arts & Cultural District (A&CD) that could be due to a lack of or inconsistent communication with the full community.
 - Las Vegas and the greater area have enough of a talent base and interest to support additional opportunities for arts and cultural events.
 - The Las Vegas Arts Council cannot accomplish all that it has set out to do without continuous paid staff, which they had previously.
- 
- Young adults are not finding enough reasons to remain in town after graduation.
 - Artists need business skills training to improve their chances of becoming self sustaining entrepreneurs.
 - There are opportunities to enhance local arts education efforts at all levels of the public and private education systems.


Short Term Goals

1. Develop a comprehensive and centralized calendar of arts activities and events that will:
 - Broaden the composition of local audiences.
 - Attract visitors from throughout the region.
 - Reduce scheduling conflicts between presenting activities.
2. Broaden and deepen the Arts & Culture District process by:

- Communicating to everyone in the community about the structure and benefits of a successful downtown A&C District.
- Cultivating not readily apparent relationships in the community.
- Further developing sensitivity to all community members and traditions.
- Encouraging long time Las Vegans to join in a leadership role in the A&CD process and in their community.
- Taking steps to ensure that the A&CD process is inclusive and transparent to all, not just those participating at this time.
- Including local government at all levels (city/county/state) in the process.
- Inviting a wider representation of the larger community in the leadership and membership of the Arts & Cultural District Steering Council.

Long Term Goals

1. Strengthen the role of the Las Vegas Arts Council in the community and address its sustainability by:
 - Relocating the Las Vegas Arts Council office and workshop space to downtown in the A&C District.
 - Addressing board and staffing issues and developing a plan to include a consistent revenue stream for paid staff.
 - Collaborating with the Arts & Cultural District Steering Committee and wider community to create new cultural events such as a western heritage festival.
 - Working with local government to develop the riverwalk into a safe and cultural focal point of interest for everyone.
2. Develop creative ways to retain your young adults following graduation by:
 - Providing a broad range of artistic and entrepreneurial opportunities for 18-35 year olds.
 - Creating a variety of welcoming places in the A&CD for students and young adults to gather.
 - Including young adults in the A&CD process and other community planning processes.

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 - Including young adults in the A&CD process and other community planning processes.
3. Reinforce and expand arts education at all levels by:
- Continuing the Elementary Fine Arts Education Program and encouraging innovative opportunities to enhance arts education overall in the schools.
 - Ensuring ongoing arts education for middle and high school students that will prepare them for college level arts curriculum and/or entrepreneurial opportunities.
 - Creating a community mentorship program for youth to give them more opportunities to learn and share about the history and heritage of their community.
 - Starting a docent training program for students to serve as docents for community exhibitions.
- 
4. Build the community connection with the three local colleges and the A&CD by partnering to:
- Draw upon local and statewide resources to provide entrepreneurial and business skills training for emerging and established artists.
 - Collaborate with United World College to develop artistic programs for all ages at the recently acquired Baptist Church building.
 - Expand upon current or create new arts and cultural programming such as:
 - phantom galleries (mini exhibits in vacant storefront window displays)
 - "Plaza Performances" (a regular series on the Plaza of dancers, poetry, music, etc)
 - student internships with local arts and cultural entrepreneurs

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

In our marketing and promotion review of Las Vegas with the community, actionable items were developed in the areas of planning and development, additional event opportunities, and enhancements to Las Vegas' promotional efforts. Our recommendations are detailed below in Planning and Development Action Items.

Common Comments

- Chamber of Commerce -- Press kit already in place, railway station pamphlets/info, summer arts magazine ads on deck (local/northern NM), website (calendar of events).
- City Council -- New council elected with opportunity for new vision.
- Arts Council -- 30 year history; most recent years not reaching full potential
- Higher Education -- Desire to participate in community:
 - UWC -- donated downtown bldg for arts use
 - Highlands -- Iron Tribe pour; engaged media arts department
 - Luna CC -- performance arts center; arts training developed
- Education system in general - coordination, communication, and collaborations could be improved. Need to see the benefit of working together.
- Old Town Commerce Club
 - Local events; involvement with Hispanic community
- Existing Events—
 - Studio tour, annual June
 - Motorcycle Rally, Annual July
 - People's Fair, Annual August
 - 2nd Saturdays gallery walk, monthly
 - Sabor (annual restaurant walk)
 - Lights Parade, Christmas
 - UWC, Highlands, Luna Events (performance, art)
 - Fiestas, July 4th weekend
- Physical
 - What about public transportation from train station to downtown?
 - Another use for vacant, boarded up buildings?
 - Is there a "gateway" from first I-25 northbound exit to A&CD?
 - Consider funneling Grand Ave to 2 lanes for traffic slow down
- Financial
 - Lack of clear budget from Lodger's Tax

- Lack of communication about existing funds
- Retail “consciousness” not yet developed; no retail crafts available that could tap into cultural aspect.
- Governmental/Agencies - what about code enforcement?
- Wish List
 - Move Farmer’s Market Downtown
 - Create an Arts Fest modeled on SF Indian Market (or tag onto it)
 - Vibrant Arts Event presence (phantom galleries, etc.)
 - Film Fest - a joint “Romaine Fielding” film festival event with Silver City

Recommendations - Planning and Development Action Items

1. Quickly improve the community arts and cultural events **calendar** accessibility for the community and visitors so as not to lose any visitors.
 - Designate the Chamber of Commerce website as the central calendar for all arts and cultural activities.
 - Build software capability for the community to add to the calendar easily.
2. Create a **citywide marketing plan** with professional consultant expertise. It will be important to get a plan in place up front to determine what type of marketing Las Vegas needs.
 - Develop the brand - create recognizable imagery and logo. This should be a community wide project.
 - Collaborate with local expertise. In our conversations with the community it became apparent that a conscious effort needs to be made to use local talent in the creation of the marketing plan, both for print and web.
 - Identify areas of marketing need, event support, and initiative. Review the event list for the city and work with organizations to effectively promote events and to prioritize how monies will be allocated from the plan.
3. Leverage the **Lodgers Tax** monies to support marketing for cultural tourism.
 - Pursue historical, architectural, and art travelers. Ratchet up the features of the area to draw specific traveler types.
 - Educate the community about the Lodgers Tax allocation process and its benefits. Keep the process transparent to all.

- The Chamber of Commerce should solicit participation from the Las Vegas Arts Council to best determine how Lodgers Tax monies should be allocated.
4. Build enhancements to the Chamber of Commerce **website**.
- Website needs optimization with heavy graphics so that internet searches select New Mexico and avoid the Nevada confusion. The heavy graphics on the website slow down the speed of navigation. Work with technical web support to develop search engine optimization and determine how to avoid the overlap with the other Las Vegas.
 - Web 2.0 enhancements - consider adding video to use with special community events, and add a visitor comment area to the website.
5. Explore all untapped marketing and promotion **funding opportunities**. Begin working on this immediately and work on it continuously as it takes time to take advantage of grant programs as many funders have strict application schedules. Some additional funding opportunities include:
- Free Calendars (NM Magazine, Tourism website) such as event calendars placed on New Mexico Magazines and the NM Tourism websites.
 - Coop Marketing Program (Tourism \$). Apply for coop funding with New Mexico Tourism and New Mexico Economic Development.
 - Northeast Regional Marketing Board.
 - Clean and Beautiful (tourism grant program).
 - Request the NM Tourism Dept write press releases.
 - NM Tourism Scenic Byways funding opportunities includes state and national grant programs and a variety of types of programs - arts, museums, libraries, etc.

Events Opportunities

- Develop "Getaway" advertising for Denver, Albuquerque and Colorado Springs markets; build around major events.
- Create a citywide event built around video art. Partner with NM Highlands University Media Dept; incorporate the high schools and utilize space in vacant buildings for exhibit space and installations.
- Increase marketing of the Las Vegas Arts Council People's Fair to audiences in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Taos. Later marketing expansion could include

throughout the state and then to regional tourist markets: Colorado, Texas, California, Oklahoma, and Arizona.



- Create an annual Film Festival with feature films produced in Las Vegas and highlight new film premiers. This creates another event that can draw from other markets in the automobile driving range. The film industry is hot in New Mexico and Las Vegas has a special role in the history of film production in New Mexico. Las Vegas should play up its history with film making. Highlands University also has a great new media arts program which could participate.

Promotional Enhancements

- Produce visitor surveys and include them in all hotels, restaurants and retail.
- Develop retail space for local crafts.
- Create gallery and studio maps and distribute statewide.
- Collaborate to create “phantom galleries” in which vacant storefront windows are used to display local works of art from students K-12, Luna Community College, United World College, and Highlands University.
- Build “Fam” Tours (familiarization). Journalists and free-lance travel writers are invited to the area (you have to host them, pay their expenses) with the idea that they’ll go home and write articles about your area that will attract tourism. Examples are travel sections of newspapers; regional, national, and international magazines; free-lance travel writers. It costs something up front but is worth it if it generates tourists.
- Post events calendar in Spanish on local Hispanic stations weekly.

- Develop a hospitality training program for local workforce to create a warm and inviting experience for visitors.

- Explore bilingual (English/Spanish) marketing opportunities.

- Create walking tours--ghost/western/architectural. Train docents to run the tours and publish a regular schedule.

- Post wayfinding signage from I-25 and the rail station all leading to Downtown and the A&CD.



- Host film union IATSE (The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts) with the expectation that they will consider Las Vegas a good location to film. Educate the business community about how to deal with and provide effective service and support to the film industry.
- Utilize existing student population in marketing efforts. United World College students are required to participate in community service each semester. They, and other students, could be trained as ambassadors, walking tour leaders, events support, town beautification--trash pick up, planting, beautification for exits, historical buildings, and other promotional activities. These efforts will not only capitalize on a source of light labor, but will also give students opportunities to learn more about Las Vegas and possibly give them an incentive to stay after graduation.
- Longer/more consistent hours for retail are necessary to provide visitors with opportunities to spend their dollars in Las Vegas and boost the local economy.
- Relocate the Farmer's Market to Downtown to reinforce community belief that the "heart" of Las Vegas is the Downtown A&CD.
- Expand shop local programs by encouraging residents and visitors to buy local. Create a colleges and city "buy local" program to launch program and serve as role models in community.

PHYSICAL PLANNING AND DESIGN

Introduction and Context

Las Vegas was founded in 1835 as a gateway to the buffalo plains on New Mexico's eastern frontier. Rich and verdant meadowlands (*vega* = meadow) nourished by the Gallinas River attracted colonists from nearby San Miguel del Vado.

The village plaza was founded upon a slight rise just west of the Gallinas River. An *acequia madre* (mother ditch) was dug, and villagers grew staple crops which they traded to Santa Fe Trail travelers. By 1875, the Plaza was ringed with impressive two-story Territorial style adobe buildings. After the railroad arrived in 1879, the Plaza was transformed by grand brick and stone Victorian style commercial buildings. Today the Las Vegas Plaza preserves the gilded age in one of New Mexico's most spectacular historic settings.

The railroad brought boomtown commerce as well as American planning and urban sensibilities. An entire town of East Las Vegas was established next to the old town, featuring a grid plan and classically inspired Carnegie and Lincoln Parks. An electric-powered streetcar line installed in 1903 replaced a horse-drawn trolley.

The Santa Fe Railroad built an imposing resort hotel and spa at Montezuma about five miles north of Las Vegas in the early 1880's. A spur railroad line from Las Vegas transferred wealthy guests to the hotel, locally known as the "castle." The Montezuma Hotel was transformed into the Armand Hammer United World College of the American West after 1983.

The complexity of the Las Vegas city plan and abundance of high quality historic architecture have attracted professional and academic scrutiny over the years. Most recently, the Reconnecting America Foundation (previously known as the Great American Station Foundation) was based in the Railroad District and completed urban design and revitalization conceptual plans for the district, and a new city hall complex on the site of a former Safeway's supermarket at Seventh Street and Douglas Avenue. The plans were completed in 2003-05.

The University of Notre Dame School of Architecture conducted a design studio in Las Vegas' historic commercial corridor in 2006. MainStreet Las Vegas efforts have focused on traffic calming strategies for Grand Avenue and streetscape improvements.

Common Comments

Several recurrent and overarching themes were identified during the community interview process. The most significant included:

- **Housing shortage downtown** - The traditional downtown housing pattern of shops on the ground floor and housing above was popular in Las Vegas. The mixed commercial and residential use has been ratified in the city's planning and zoning code and is allowable in the MainStreet corridor. Many potential housing units in historic buildings are in poor condition.
- **Lack of affordable artist residences** - Las Vegas suffers from a lack of affordable rental housing. Also, the recent appreciation in housing and real estate property values has affected Las Vegas as listing prices are overly optimistic and inflated. The market is currently in a period of readjustment (as elsewhere), but slow to stabilize at realistic prices. The lack of water has hampered building opportunities.
- **Empty buildings and deteriorating historic buildings** - The sheer abundance of historic commercial buildings located in the three major commercial districts and elsewhere poses a fundamental conundrum for revitalization and historic preservation. In addition, deferred maintenance and demolition by neglect are reaching critical stages. The collapse of the pivotal Center Block building on Lincoln and Grand Avenues two years ago was a symbolic wake-up call.
- **Finding the Old Town Plaza, historic core and the A&CD** - The fascinating and complex city plan of Las Vegas is a blessing and a curse - it's hard for visitors and tourists to find Old Town. Access streets are not well marked by directional signage.
- **Enforcement and building codes** - The City of Las Vegas has been perceived as too lax in code enforcement during the past few decades. Spot zoning, mobile home intrusions, demolition by neglect, and trash abuses are concerns that will require attention.
- **Lack of downtown nightlife/entertainment** - Despite the presence of New Mexico Highlands University in the midst of the downtown districts, there is an absence of nightlife. Venues for music, dancing, live theater and cinema are in short supply.

Kudos/Accomplishments

Las Vegas has made significant progress to protect its architectural wealth. The community has been creative, resourceful, and tenacious in the face of obstacles such as difficult finances and drought. These efforts include:

- **Historic Preservation Planning and Projects** - Soon after the City of East Las Vegas and the Town of West Las Vegas were consolidated into one city in 1970, community leaders embarked on a historic preservation program. Architectural surveys and register nominations have yielded nine historic districts listed on the state and national registers. Six locally designated districts ensure design

review for building projects. The Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation has been active since 1980 with many projects to its credit. Las Vegas is a Certified Local Government (CLG) recognized by the state Historic Preservation Division and as such is eligible each year for federal funds in support of historic preservation projects benefiting the community.

- **Las Vegas Arts Council** - has maintained a 30 year record of service and programming. The Arts Council sponsors the annual People's Faire in Carnegie Park and also supports the Nat Gold Players theater group. With a new Board of Directors, the Arts Council is embracing an enhanced role in the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District.
- **La Plaza Vieja Partnership (LPVP)** - raised over \$2 million for the rehabilitation of 15 buildings in Old Town in the late 1980's. With a combination of local property owners, investors, City of Las Vegas, and public support from a federal Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG), LPVP was effective in reversing the decline of the Plaza and Bridge Street. The project provides an example and template for community initiated development that remains relevant.

- **Railroad Depot rehabilitation** - The City of Las Vegas realized an impressive rehabilitation of the historic (1899) Santa Fe Railroad depot several years ago at a cost of over \$1 million. The depot is a multi-purpose facility that is the cornerstone of plans to revitalize the railroad district.



- **Plaza Hotel and Ilfeld Building expansion** - The major rehabilitation of the Plaza Hotel in 1980-82 is providing a much needed catalyst for Old Town's revival. Currently the hotel is engaged in a major expansion into the Ilfeld building next door. The proposed ballroom and entertainment facilities in the Ilfeld building will greatly expand the cultural and entertainment venues for Old Town.
- **Baptist Church Acquisition** - The donation of the former First Baptist Church on Seventh Street to the United World College enables the development of an arts and cultural center in the heart of the Douglas Avenue commercial district.

- **Main Street progress** - Reestablishment of the MainStreet Las Vegas program in 2005 has reinvigorated the City's capacity to undertake infrastructure improvements and develop a unified vision for the revitalization of the historic commercial corridor. Las Vegas MainStreet has been proactive in securing funding for major drainage and streetscape improvements on Grand Avenue and also secured the pilot Arts and Cultural District designation.

Recommendations and Strategies

The Physical Planning and Design team considers priority infrastructure improvements to primarily serve residents' needs above those of visitors. In this spirit, two sayings articulated during the interview process resonated:

"Make it good for the residents and the visitors will come"

"Arts and culture is our story - use art to tell our story"

Boundary Issues - The proposed Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District is approximately one square mile and is essentially the historic Nineteenth Century core of the city. The A&C District contains most of the city's nine national historic districts as well as the campus of New Mexico Highlands University. The A&CD Council should consider creating a Phase One core area within this large district that can provide the highest impact for the limited resources that are initially available. Expand the district core or create additional focus areas, as additional resources and program success is achieved.



Way finding and signage

- Create a sense of arrival into the Old Town area through visual sequences from Grand Avenue that draws a visitor in to the historic core and A&CD.

- Getting from Grand Avenue to Old Town should be a step through time that interprets and highlights the history and cultures of the community.
- Connectivity between the three Las Vegas commercial districts and Highlands University should be strengthened using the Gallinas River walk as the connecting thread. There are opportunities to visually open up and reveal this asset and provide an art walk or “Art in the Park” amenities.

At Risk Buildings - Las Vegas’ outstanding inventory of historic building stock is requiring a focused and sustained maintenance program. The City of Las Vegas is a Certified Local Government (CLG), eligible for pass-through funding for historic preservation from the National Park Service and the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division. CLG funds may be utilized for research and public education as well as municipal programs for historic preservation, building rehabilitation, financial incentives and code enforcement policy. The A&CD Resource Team recommends that the A&CD Council consider a partnership with the City Community Development Department, Design Review Board, and the Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation for the purpose of addressing the critical issue of at-risk buildings.

Appropriate Parking - What’s the appropriate amount of parking in downtown Las Vegas? Think of all the spaces in downtown as a system:

- Develop a system wide inventory of existing places and their rate of use.
- Consider reducing parking requirements in the zoning code as an incentive for desired uses such as mixed use projects or artists live/work studios.
- Allow on-street or off-site parking to be counted in meeting the parking requirement.

Retaining the architectural fabric of Las Vegas

- Update the existing historic district design guidelines.
- Continue and expand façade improvement/incentive program.



Safeway site design

The Safeway site at Seventh Street and Douglas Avenue offers an excellent opportunity as a catalytic mixed use project. This site could also serve as the rallying point for the community to engage in a process that represents the multi-cultural

diversity of the community. For example the Talin MarketPlace in Albuquerque is one model for this type of approach.

Streetscape

In selecting the theme and materials for street furniture and planters in the Arts and Cultural District, incorporate the use of local artists in creating these designs.

Downtown Master Plan Process

Develop a Master Plan process that is comprehensive from identifying a vision for the District to prioritizing specific projects and funding sources to implement the vision. It will also be important that the planning process utilizes a creative and extensive community engagement process that brings all the cultural and socio-economic groups of the community together to represent their special interests. The plan should also identify and exploit all possible funding and financing sources including Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), revenue bonds, etc.

Potential Projects

Several potential projects were identified that would support the success and viability of the new Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas:

- Artist housing incentives in and near the District to provide inexpensive residences.
- Farmers Market to support the agricultural traditions of the community.
- Artist Coop/Incubator to promote emerging artists and cultural entrepreneurs, and provide an inexpensive outlet for their work.
- Art Market that portrays the diversity of the art being created in the community.
- International cultural center that celebrates the diversity within the community and their roots from around the globe.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND FINANCE

Introduction and Context

For the first century of its existence, after its founding in 1835, Las Vegas' economic fortunes were nourished by transportation corridors. The Santa Fe Trail (1821-79) and later the Santa Fe Railroad (1879-present) provided critical linkages to markets and

customers in the Midwest and beyond. Competing railroad lines, automobiles, and the Great Depression ended Las Vegas' economic pre-eminence in New Mexico.

Key base agricultural industries have also declined substantially. Sheep, cattle, timber, and other major economic drivers have nearly vanished. Today, major governmental and institutional payrolls sustain the local economy, but in fact Las Vegas and northeastern New Mexico are contending with declining and aging populations and infrastructure deficiencies.

Las Vegas' major assets are its educational institutions, natural beauty, sensational historic architecture, multi-cultural diversity, and entrepreneurial spirit. Las Vegas' location is also an advantage, as it is easily accessible on Interstate 25 between Albuquerque and Denver.

Las Vegas' governmental and organizational capacity has fluctuated over the years, sensitive to difficult and limited financial resources. Today, however, Las Vegas enjoys progressive and visionary leadership and a renewed determination. The timing is opportune for the development of an Arts and Cultural District.

Common Comments

Several recurrent themes were articulated by community leaders regarding financial concerns for community economic development and the potential of an Arts and Cultural District. The most significant themes are:

- **Las Vegas needs a venture capital fund** for entrepreneurs and small business owners. Many local entrepreneurs have good ideas for a business, but lack the collateral to borrow funds for start-ups and expansions. About \$300-500,000 of venture capital funds would be adequate to start an effective program. Economic development leaders are aware of this need and are working hard to attract funds for a program.
- **There is a need in Las Vegas for entrepreneurial and business skills training.** The local population is talented, with innate genius and the skills to handcraft and manufacture products for the marketplace. There is a need for a business incubator and business skills workshops. Current business training programs are not well publicized. The Las Vegas Economic Development Corporation has started an Enterprise Initiative for entrepreneur development with matching funding provided by the City and Kellogg Foundation. This is a new program and will need to be monitored closely.
- **Inflated real estate values are a disincentive for development.** Like elsewhere, Las Vegas was affected by the dramatic real estate speculation caused by readily available mortgage financing. Residential and commercial sales price listings rose sharply within the past decade. After the subprime mortgage crisis, the decline in property valuation has been slow to reach Las

Vegas. As a result, there is an abundance of real estate for sale at optimistic prices, and the local market is readjusting to a recession.

- **Rental housing and affordable housing are major concerns.** There is an acute shortage of quality affordable rental housing for students, working class people, and artists. Much of the affordable housing stock in Las Vegas is rundown. NMHU is building a new campus dormitory that will help alleviate the problem. The City lacks a Community Development Corporation (CDC) that could be an effective partner in housing development.
- **There is a historical lack of consensus and cooperation between government, institutions, and the private sector.** The divided communities of East and West Las Vegas consolidated in 1970, but the legacy of “patron” politics and political fiefdoms is still prevalent. The community has made progress, but still lacks a unified organizational network and financial teamwork to adequately support local community economic development.
- **Las Vegas suffers from a fragmented and overextended legislative delegation.** Las Vegas’ critical infrastructure needs and its considerable institutional needs, recently dominated by water, place great pressures on its legislative representatives. Often high priority needs are not met or addressed in an efficient process.
- **The City of Las Vegas is financially strapped.** The city government is currently struggling to stabilize its finances. While city officials seem eager to assist and participate in the Arts and Cultural District development, actual financial support may be limited in the short term.
- **There is a perceived lack of sales opportunities for local artists.** There are several excellent galleries and display venues for local artists in the community. However, the community may not have the financial resources, art appreciation, or motivation to purchase art and sustain local artists. Other strategies, such as internet sales, may enhance local artists’ access to markets and sales.

Kudos/Accomplishments

- **The presence of three higher educational institutions offers dynamic potential and opportunities for development collaboration.** Progressive and community-minded leadership at New Mexico Highlands University, Luna Community College, and Armand Hammer United World College enables new and powerful opportunities for the Arts and Cultural District.
- **The City government has undergone reform and realignment in recent years.** The city is improving its management systems and professional capacity,

and officials are interested in creative financing strategies to support the development of the local economy in Las Vegas.

- **The city owns several key downtown properties and sites in the District** and is interested in creative partnerships. These properties include the railroad depot, former City Hall, Carnegie Library, the City Museum, the former Safeway site, OK Café building on Bridge Street, and the Police station complex on the Plaza.
- **The Las Vegas Economic Development Corporation has secured grant funding from the Kellogg Foundation** for an Enterprise Initiative and entrepreneurial training programs. This major initiative can greatly support the Arts and Cultural District.



- **The city will see a dramatic increase in hotel/motel rooms within two years.** The new Holiday Inn Express and the on-going Plaza Hotel expansion project are symbolic of enhanced potential for tourism development in the city and region.
- **Las Vegas has a significant niche as a film location site.** Last year's Academy Award winner for Best Film, "No Country for Old Men," was substantially filmed in Las Vegas. The community may consider marketing campaigns, film festivals, and local incentives to enhance this opportunity. In addition, the community may explore film industry job training programs and entrepreneurial businesses.

Recommendations and Strategies

The financing and sustainability team identified six broad thematic strategies for development of the creative economy in Las Vegas. These include:

1. Social Networks and Organizational Capacity
2. Creative Use of Lodger's Tax
3. Catalytic Developer
4. Developing a Historic Building Arts Program

5. Creative Financing
6. Buy Local

1. Social Networks and Organizational Capacity

A major challenge to the success of an Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas is simply identifying artists and cultural entrepreneurs and organizing them as a key constituency. Sustainability for the long haul will require determined volunteers as well as cash and in-kind resources.

Las Vegas is a commercial and service area for a large area. By utilizing an Asset Mapping process, the Arts and Cultural Districts Council may begin to identify important individuals to participate in the District.

A cultural economy database is a valuable and essential tool for leadership development, collaboration, and programming opportunities for the District. The completion of this effort should be celebrated by a social event and wide distribution of the data base.

Resource team members are available to provide technical assistance and other resources for the Asset Mapping process.

2. Creative Use of Lodger's Tax

The resource team discovered that the current rate of Lodger's Tax collections in Las Vegas is 4%, compared to Raton's rate of 5% and Santa Fe's rate of 7%.

While raising the Lodger's Tax rate is a sensitive issue in any community, the resource team recommends a creative and thoughtful community assessment of increasing the local lodger's rate for the purposes of reinvestment in the A&C District.

The strategy of utilizing incremental increases in lodger's taxes to support a revenue bonding process for capital projects and cultural institutions within the district, a non-profit arts center for example is strongly encouraged.

3. Catalytic Developer

With many significant historic buildings in Las Vegas at risk due to critical maintenance needs, the community should consider implementing a catalytic development strategy which could raise capital to rehabilitate numerous buildings simultaneously.

Las Vegas has witnessed catalytic development recently in the La Plaza Vieja Partnership. Developed by Slick and Associates in partnership with Plaza and Bridge Street property owners, over 50 limited partner investors, and the City of Las Vegas, the project invested over \$2 million in the rehabilitation of 15 historic buildings in the

late 1980's. La Plaza Vieja Partnership played a key role in arresting the decline of Old Town and contributing to its revival.



While La Plaza Vieja Partnership offered a creative model of for-profit catalytic development, other models may apply. The founding of a local community development corporation (CDC) to enhance housing and mixed-use infill buildings within the Arts and Cultural District seems like a logical and needed next step.

Other types of “legacy” reinvestment projects, whereby local property owners can create long-term investment partnerships for rehabilitation and residency while maintaining ownership of property are worth pursuing.

The New Mexico Finance Authority received a major allotment of New Markets Tax Credits from the U.S. Treasury Department in 2007. New Markets Tax Credits are intended to attract significant capital investment in the nation’s most economically distressed census tracts. New Markets Tax Credits may be earned in conjunction with federal and state historic preservation tax credits, offering investors over a 50% return in federal tax credits within seven years. The New Markets Tax Credit program may be appropriate for a catalytic development project in Las Vegas.

4. Developing a Historic Building Arts Program

The creation of a historic building arts program that could train local craftsmen has been much discussed and a long held dream for many Las Vegans. The need for such a program in Las Vegas and elsewhere in New Mexico (where many Victorian era buildings are in need of maintenance) could be a major opportunity for Luna Community College.

A creative approach might be to combine a historic building arts program with a sustainable green building course that could promote innovative and energy-efficient solutions to rehabilitation of existing buildings.

Such a historic/sustainable building program could attract strong and diverse partners from federal and state agencies, local educational institutions, workforce development advocates, and private contractors.

5. City Government and Creative Financing

A change in administration at Las Vegas City Hall within the past six months has coincided with the Arts and Cultural District designation. While the new administration will face difficult administrative and management challenges, it appears open and motivated to establish a partnership with the local Arts and Cultural District Council.

Creating a development consortium with New Mexico Highlands University, the United World College, Luna Community College, and local financial institutions, might work to everyone's benefit. Such a partnership could help clarify the city's legislative agenda as well as community development priorities.



The City's adoption of the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) is a significant advantage in supporting the Arts and Culture District. Other municipal programs such as tax increment financing and the Metropolitan Redevelopment Area could enhance to city's capacity to invest in the District.

These strategies may be addressed in a downtown master plan. Other creative financing programs are listed here below.

Financing Programs for Enhancing the Cultural Economy

- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), working primarily through its state and regional offices, assists rural communities with a variety of grant and loan programs. The USDA also provides loans and guarantees to private business owners. Some of the important financing programs that could support the Arts and Cultural District include Home Financing loans, Community Facilities Loans and Grants, Rural Economic Development loans and grants, the Rural Community Development Initiative, and Guaranteed Loans for Business. Please note the Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG) and Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEGr) mentioned above.
- The passage of New Mexico's Affordable Housing Act in the 2004 Legislature enables municipalities to invest public funds in affordable housing projects and development. By creating an affordable housing plan, Las Vegas may identify housing issues and needs to enhance the cultural economy. The New Mexico

Mortgage Finance Authority also invests public funds in affordable housing projects.

- The New Mexico Finance Authority (NMFA) is a primary source for low-interest loans and grants for buildings and infrastructure development. NMFA provides assistance to municipalities and other governmental entities for major projects. Another program administered by the NMFA of interest to Las Vegas is the New Markets Tax credit program, which can combine new markets tax credits with historic preservation tax credits. These combined federal tax credits can offer developers over a 50% return on investment (in tax credits alone) within seven years. A recovering commercial district such as downtown Las Vegas could qualify for New Markets tax credit allocations from NMFA.
- The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development offers a variety of programs that may be useful to the development of Silver City's Arts and Cultural District. These include Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Rural Housing and Economic Development Grants, and HUD Hope VI Affordable Housing grants for Main Street communities.
- Federal Scenic Byway grants are available to continue development of the Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway.
- The New Mexico MainStreet Capital Outlay fund is a source of funding for capital projects. The New Mexico Arts and Cultural Districts Act will allow and enable the City to invest capital outlay funds in projects located within the Arts and Cultural District. These funds may be used for both public and private projects and businesses. A non-profit developer may also apply for these funds.

6. Buy Local

The consortium of three colleges along with city and county governments, and other partners, are encouraged to develop a policy of "buy local." Such a policy may work creatively with local growers, craftsmen, suppliers, tradesmen, and others to reduce cash leakage from Las Vegas and support the local economy.

LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT - SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Building an Arts and Cultural District in Las Vegas will require intensive grass-roots organizing and human resource development on one hand and thoughtful strategic planning on the other. Factionalism, community politics, and competition for scarce resources have long divided the community, and these hindrances to growth and prosperity need to be transcended to create new economic opportunity. Hard work and sustained vision can ensure the success of an Arts and Cultural District.

The Resource Team recommends several projects for implementation within the next few months and year that can build the foundation for enhanced public and private investments. These action steps are:

- Begin the Asset Mapping process to identify all artists, knowledge workers, and contributors to the local cultural economy and establish a useful data base and network for maximum inclusion and diversification;
- Develop a Fund-raising strategy and process;
- Work closely with the City Council and Administration to craft and enact a municipal Arts and Culture District ordinance;
- Develop measurable benchmarks and performance measures for reporting to the community, NM Arts Commission, and other state and federal agencies;
- Begin the process of developing a Cultural Plan for the District, and
- Work with the City's Community Development Department to create a Master Plan for the greater downtown commercial corridor.

New Mexico MainStreet and its partner agencies stand ready to assist the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Council with the implementation of the critical first projects.





Las Vegas MainStreet A VISIONING FOCUS GROUP BRANDING the Las Vegas ARTS and CULTURAL DISTRICT

Conducted November 14 - 15, 2008

by

Elmo Baca, NM MainStreet Program Associate in Special Projects
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SUMMARY

Developing effective themed images and messages to support the new Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District is a community wide project in which collaboration is crucial to its success. This visioning focus group was designed to solicit input from community members about perceptions of arts, culture and community identity, and how to develop these perceptions into a unified branding message. These responses and community dialogue will guide development of a cultural plan and dynamic vision for branding to be used in future marketing and promotional materials.

Luna Community College was the setting for the visioning workshop led by New Mexico MainStreet Program Associates, Elmo Baca, Regina Chavez and Charlie Deans, and New Mexico MainStreet Consultant, Maggie Macnab. A flyer was prepared (attached as a separate file) inviting the public to attend a two-session workshop to discuss perceptions of their community and to learn about branding. Nine participants attended the late afternoon session focusing on destination branding and how communities use it to their advantage. Thirteen participants attended the next morning's session which was primarily a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis and the visioning exercise. Participants concluded the workshop by developing vision statements.

Although this was advertised as a community visioning workshop to produce appropriate branding themes for the emerging Arts and Cultural District, the discussion amongst participants articulated themes and opportunities critical to the success of the District and ultimate effectiveness of a branding campaign. It is apparent that deeper community issues regarding the involvement of youth in the District's development and the capacity of the District (and greater community) to effectively expand the District's benefits and activities to a broad, inclusive constituency supersede issues of marketing and branding at this particular time. The visioning exercises were intended to serve as a prologue to developing the Cultural Plan, branding, marketing and Downtown Master Plan. The process for each of these projects will need to be carefully considered in light of this report's findings.

This report summarizes a brief community discussion regarding the branding of the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District. The major discovery of these discussions was the observation that arts and culture may have a significant role in addressing the current challenges of youth alienation, cultural diversity and socio-cultural community integration in Las Vegas. This revelation provides fertile ground for the next phase development of the Cultural Plan and branding campaign.

On the following pages are the notes from both sessions and outlined next steps for use in developing the Las Vegas Arts & Cultural District Cultural Plan, Branding, Marketing Plan and Downtown Master Plan. The notes are not intended to be interpretative, but rather a documentation of the workshop.

DAY 1 - Friday, November 14, 2008
4:00 to 6:30pm

NM MainStreet facilitators, Elmo Baca, Regina Chavez, Charlie Deans and Maggie Macnab opened the workshop with introductions of themselves and a brief explanation of how the sessions would be used in developing a Cultural Plan, a Downtown Master Plan, and a Branding/Marketing Plan for their community. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves with name, organization or affiliation, their expectation of the workshop and to share an item they were invited to bring that represented their feelings or thoughts about Las Vegas. The facilitators then explained how community visioning would lead to a successful brand of their community and thus setting the stage for developing a Destination Marketing Plan. They also gave a brief summary of the Arts & Cultural District Resource Team Assessment Report focusing on Marketing/Promotions and Cultural Planning.

Maggie Macnab gave a presentation on destination branding, defining what a brand is and is not, and presented examples of towns that are well branded. Following the presentation, the participants were given a visioning/branding quiz to take home and complete in preparation for the next morning's discussion.

DAY 2 - Saturday, November 15, 2008
9:00am to 12:00pm

The facilitators opened the day with introductions of new participants followed by a review and lengthy discussion of the take home visioning/branding quiz. While sharing their own assessments, the participants were led as a group with the following SWOT analysis of Las Vegas:

STRENGTHS:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • People | • Architecture |
| • History | • Natural beauty |
| • Culture/community | • Hometown spirit |
| • Location/mountains/climate | • Artists |
| • Rural qualities | • Cultural background |
| • Cultural diversity | • Lots of people with talents |
| • Hot springs | • Acceptance |
| • Great politicians | • Mental health services |

WEAKNESSES:

- Lack of pride
- Slumlords
- Lack of strong ordinances
- Lack of opportunities to retain young people
- Indifference to whole community
- Vandalism/theft
- Lack of water
- Lack of housing development
- Lack of jobs for young people
- Properties not kept up
- (Youth)feeling trapped here
- "Patron" mentality undermines progress
- Community disconnect among organizations
- Separation of two school districts "tortilla curtain"
- "Elephant in room" syndrome of Two Towns
- Cultural background
- "What's in it for me?"
- Lack of recreation for youth
- Youth need direction
- Lack of pride

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Trails, mountains, recreation
- Geographic diversity
- This visioning process
- Airport underutilized
- Development of sustainable energy (wind and solar)
- Support young creative people as entrepreneurs
- People working together (colleges, school districts, etc)
- MainStreet revitalization
- Youth, Baptist church building, Farmers Market
- People "awakening" now, can tap everyone
- Energy opportunities - jobs needed here for young
- Obama volunteers can and should be engaged
- Pride opportunity
- Movie industry potential tremendous
- The Optic printing truth now
- Retirement opportunities, programs, events

THREATS:

- Community and government not buying in
- Misperceptions: good vs bad change
- Losing beautiful buildings and history (not enough restoration efforts)
- Ordinances not preventing degradation
- As creative/arts education ends, gang activity increases
- Good opportunities vs gang opportunities here, need a better reason than being in a gang to stay
- "What's in it for me?"
- Improvements vs displacement (gentrification)
- Youth don't want to work
- Gangs/mafia recruiting Hispanics all over USA
- Youth not taking advantage of educational opportunities
- Fear of economic displacement
- Long term speculation hinders progress instead of creating opportunities
- Change inevitable, must guide it, but community not seeing this
- Self-destruction happening as a result of non-action
- Mentality that dreams get squashed, why succeed? Hopeless
- Create vs destroy (high energy in young males must be channeled)
- Drugs and alcohol
- Moneymaking opportunities from drugs and alcohol are tempting young
- Youth going to gang culture instead of Hispanic culture

CRITICAL ISSUES IMPACTING ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LAS VEGAS

The presence of three young people (aged 15-25) animated Saturday's discussion. The involvement of the youth in the recent Presidential campaign and election reflected an unprecedented involvement of young people in civic and community affairs in Las Vegas and presents an opportunity and challenge to the community to sustain the youth interest in community development and also the Arts and Cultural District.

A serious undercurrent of youth disenchantment, alienation and futility was articulated as prevalent in Las Vegas. Gang activity and related spin-offs of anti-social and criminal impacts were (indirectly) identified as serious threats to the well-being and prosperity of the community and emerging Arts and Cultural District. Prevalent and recurrent concerns of gentrification, cultural alienation, and isolation surfaced which could undermine future projects.

Participants in Saturday's discussion seemed to imply (needs to be affirmed by broader community dialogue) that a window of opportunity exists in Las Vegas based upon recent transitions in government and civic institutions at federal, state, and local levels. Creative approaches to planning, economic and community development, arts education, youth programs, cultural diversity, public/private partnerships and

other essential community improvement initiatives are timely in the light of the initial phases of Las Vegas' Arts and Cultural District.

VISIONING

Following the SWOT analysis, the group was guided into visualizing what their community would look like in seven years. Each was then asked to write one idea or vision in approximately 3-5 words on a 4x6 card. Many cards were collected and read anonymously. The facilitators then helped the group categorize their vision ideas into broad categories:

- Youth
- Education
- Economics/small businesses
- Beautification/restoration
- Social activities/recreation
- Government/involvement
- Housing
- Arts center/activities
- Volunteerism
- Natural resources

The participants then consolidated some of the categories and were then divided into small groups of three or four each to develop vision statements for each category. Each group then reported back to the large group with the vision statement for their category:

- (Government/Restoration): Coherent government and community coordination and planning enable the effective restoration and revitalization of the historic town of Las Vegas.
- (People/Volunteerism): People proud to say they "live in Las Vegas"
- (Education): Las Vegas offers unique educational opportunities for all ages.
- (Recreation/Social Activities/Natural Resources): Las Vegas is a true epicenter for recreational activities because of the climate, location, accessibility and atmosphere. Social activities abound for all ages and cultures due to expanding and diverse population.
- (Economy/Small Business/Arts & Culture): The economy of Las Vegas nurtures small business and the arts through cultural heritage.

The workshop concluded with a summary of how this information will be used in developing a cultural plan, master plan and destination brand for Las Vegas. Participants were thanked for their input.

* * *

BRANDING AND THE CULTURAL PLAN PROCESS FOR THE LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

The Las Vegas Visioning Focus Group on Branding discussion and the Cultural Asset Mapping workshop sponsored during the same week (November 13) by UNM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) were scheduled as major political and economic events were unfolding that are having significant impacts in Las Vegas and beyond. These events include the election of Senator Barack Obama as President of the United States; election of "progressive" candidates for state offices including U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives and other offices; the continuing and compounded effects of a global economic recession; and local economic impacts affecting Las Vegas' real estate industry, tourism and hospitality industry, and small business development.

The small number of participants in these discussions articulated important themes related to branding and cultural plan development. The New Mexico MainStreet visioning/branding resource team recognizes the importance to adapt to an extraordinary set of circumstances. It is apparent that unique opportunities exist specifically to involve young people in the planning and development of the emerging Arts and Cultural District that will help guide our recommendations for branding development and the evolution of the Cultural Plan.

Two recommendations informed by the Visioning/Branding Focus Group discussions in Las Vegas are as follows:

- Recruit youth representatives (as identified by recent political campaign/community organizing activity) for all participating Arts and Cultural District organizations, including Las Vegas MainStreet, the Las Vegas Arts Council, Citizens Committee for Historic Preservation, the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee, and other partners;
- Utilize UNM BBER's Asset Mapping project (Social Network Analysis) to expand Arts and Cultural District creative networks to include youth and community organizers as demonstrated by the recent political campaign (see below).

Youth participants clearly can make significant contributions in branding development and cultural planning as evidenced by the Focus Group discussions. Important branding considerations of target audiences, tourism and hospitality positioning and marketing, utilization of multi-media technologies and strategies, and cultural diversity, are all likely to be influenced by youth involvement. We urge Las Vegas Arts

and Cultural District leaders to recruit younger board members and volunteers as soon as possible.

CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING THE COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT

UNM's BBER has commenced the "Cultural Asset Mapping" project (also described as a Social Networking Analysis) in Las Vegas to identify all relevant and important people contributing to the Las Vegas region's cultural economy. This process is expected to require about three months work to complete in late January 2009.

Under the direction of BBER's Dr. Jeff Mitchell, the Cultural Asset Mapping project is independently managed and requires minimal oversight from Las Vegas community members. However, the NMMS Visioning/Branding Resource Team recommends (with concurrence of New Mexico MainStreet, BBER, and the Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District Steering Committee) that BBER be contacted immediately to consider expanding the Cultural Asset Mapping project to include youth volunteers and community organizers.

SIGNATURE EVENT

Another outcome of the cultural planning process will be to inventory large community events that are currently held in Las Vegas and determine their success level. This will be in preparation for developing a "signature event" that will incorporate and reflect the vision and brand of Las Vegas. An existing event may be further developed into signature event status or a new event may be created. The Cultural Plan process will further address how the Arts & Cultural District can best capitalize on a successful signature event.

THE CULTURAL PLAN PROCESS - NEXT STEPS

The New Mexico MainStreet Visioning/Branding Resource Team recommends the next steps for the Cultural Plan development:

1. Recruit youth volunteers and new board members for all Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District partner organizations.
2. Expand BBER's Cultural Asset Mapping project to include youth and community organizers in the Social Network Analysis.
3. Contact New Mexico Highlands University, the Armand Hammer United World College, and Luna Community College to attract potential student interns and projects related to the branding project, cultural plan and downtown master plan.
4. Work with all partners to recruit and organize volunteers for planning focus groups to develop the Arts and Cultural District Cultural Plan.

5. Work with the New Mexico MainStreet Visioning/Branding Resource Team to organize and develop an effective public relations and marketing campaign in support of the Cultural Plan development (commencing in January 2009).

THE BRANDING PLAN PROCESS FOR THE LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT

The most compelling way in which Las Vegas' many attributes can be expressed is through a branding strategy. The launch of the Arts and Cultural District within the city of Las Vegas presents a timely opportunity to create a community brand. Rather than being a physical product (although there are tangible components to a brand), the well-managed brand provides distinction for the community and adds value by making itself meaningful—and therefore useful—to its audience. The brand must convey the spirit of the Las Vegas community. The branding process begins with what already exists within the community, defined in the SWOT analysis conducted on November 14 and 15, 2008. The brand is not the tangible components it is comprised of: the logo, slogan or various collateral pieces, rather, the brand *is the principle around which the community organizes itself to create extraordinary experiences for the visitor, and creates a sense of pride and ownership for the community residents.*

The brand is the single-minded message that shapes and controls the community's identity and it is essential that community leaders are able to rise above differences and understand and embrace this point for it to be successful.

The purpose of the 2-day Community Visioning Focus Group was to identify the most compelling statements from within the community—inclusive of both positive and negative perceptions. These existing perceptions/realities identify the messages that enhance Las Vegas and those that minimize it. Once these components are identified, they can be addressed and integrated into a comprehensive plan that includes Cultural Planning, Marketing, Promotion and the ultimate Brand.

RECOMMENDED STEPS TO CREATING THE SUCCESSFUL DESTINATION BRAND

The steps to the creation of a successful brand reside in the community's participation, clarity and agreement of how to present their unique brand to potential visitors. How to integrate the most relevant messages into the brand and the subsequent implementation within the cultural, marketing/master plans, signature and promotional events will be determined in the upcoming months.

These recommendations include:

- SWOT analysis and definitions: assess the current community brand through local perceptions (*completed*)
- Refine data collected from the Community Visioning Focus Group and address existing internal impediments at the community level: Community must be involved on an ongoing basis (*ongoing*)
- Position Las Vegas' attributes against visitor needs and wants: Assess existing

- visitor feedback; gather current and potential visitor wants and needs; anticipate future opportunities for tourism (*completed, ongoing, future*)
- Articulate the Brand: hire a branding consultant to create components for the Las Vegas Brand (*future*)
- Integrate the Brand into future Cultural, Marketing and Master Plans, and Signature and Promotional Events: Determine the most effective ways to utilize the Brand (*future*)
- Manage the Brand: ongoing measurements of Brand effectiveness (*ongoing*)
- Extend the Brand: Continue to expand events and collateral (*future*)

BRAND COMPONENTS

The following are the essential components that comprise a brand, along with their definitions:

The Promise: The ‘promise’ is making good on who and what the community claims to be. It is the sacred component of the community’s integrity. Not a ‘thing’, the community promise is the essence of Las Vegas: the soul of your branding program. It is essential that the majority of the community is aware of and emulates it—from service people, to city government, to businesses, to the people you pass on the street. The entire community is the “ambassador” of the brand. What builds it is internal communication and understanding, the principles built through community participation. As noted in the recommended steps to the Cultural Plan Process, recruit youth already engaged with the recent presidential election and couple their enthusiasm and interest with the gatekeepers of Las Vegas’ depth of history and culture to fuel the future of this remarkable community.

The Logo or Logotype and Slogan: The logo is the pervasive visual identification, to be included in all aspects of marketing and promotion, and is a visual and/or symbolic representation expressing the heart of a community. The slogan, or tagline, is the verbal message stating the essence of the community. This statement should be simple, concise, and accurate to Las Vegas’ most prevalent message/messages. It goes hand in hand with the logo, and should be used in nearly all situations alongside it, with certain exceptions in which space is an issue, or there are other constraints.

Collateral: Collateral extends the brand into the targeted audience, providing both specific information on things such as the arts, historical interest, special events, recreational opportunities, etc., as well as a general cohesiveness to an overall look and feel to all materials created for this purpose. Variety is essential to maximize the diverse potential markets, but consistency is key for an effective and successful brand. This consistency establishes the opportunity for common identification and crossover between interests. Collateral can be web based, such as informational websites for tourism; or as print, such as in publication advertising, rack cards, brochures and the like.

IDENTIFIED COMPONENTS FOR THE LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICT BRAND

The Visioning Focus Group set benchmarks around which the brand should be organized. The Focus Group identified the following that should be prioritized and incorporated into the comprehensive brand as a compelling verbal and visual message.

- Cultural Diversity
- History
- Arts
- Recreational Opportunities
- Education
- Youth Involvement

Las Vegas contains many uniquely attractive attributes that can be leveraged for a comprehensive and compelling brand as the community comes together as a unified voice to support it. Defining that voice—determining the most important aspects to message with the Brand that address both the community and the visitor’s interests—is the first step to creating the brand. A balance that gives equal credibility to a cohesively thought-out strategy and its creative implementation are essential to creating reliability and delight: the two most important elements of a successful brand.

We hope this report will serve as a successful next step in developing the Las Vegas Arts & Cultural District.

* * *

Thanks to Lawrence Quintana and Luna Community College for providing the ample space, screen, and refreshments.

APPENDIX

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AN INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL ASSETS

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and Molly Bleecker

with
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and
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June 2009

Funding provided by:
New Mexico Economic Development Department
New Mexico MainStreet

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Las Vegas is rich in history, cultural tradition and natural beauty. Residents draw on these resources and traditions, as individuals and as a community, to preserve and cultivate their unique and distinctive way of life. During the past few years, the community has also begun to develop a strong and motivated group of leaders working to broaden the reach of these traditions, to both improve the quality of life and strengthen the economy.

Their task is not easy. It is often suggested that any initiative to develop an economy on the basis of arts, culture and tradition must confront a central paradox – artists and those who place culture at the core of their life thrive as individuals and resist efforts to ‘brand’ and ‘market’ their work and community. This is certainly true of many in Las Vegas, a town that was established and has thrived for many years as a land grant on the frontier. This study documents the measure of the challenge faced by the emerging leadership.

The central finding of this study is the paradox of a high level of individual involvement in artistic and cultural (A&C) activities and a remarkable degree of A&C institutional decentralization in and around Las Vegas. To cite only a few of the measures of this phenomenon more carefully documented in the body of the study:

- In 51 surveys of arts and cultural leaders in the Las Vegas area, respondents identified 134 different local arts, cultural and civic organizations with which they were involved. No fewer than 64 were mentioned by only one respondent, and another 15 were referenced by two respondents. Only eight organizations were mentioned by three or more persons, and only two by more than ten. Arguably the four largest institutions in the region – the City of Las Vegas, NM Highlands University, United World College and Luna Community College – were each referenced by fewer than three participants. In many other communities that BBER has investigated in New Mexico, large public and especially educational institutions serve as a principal site and organizer for community arts and cultural activities.
- According to the data collected in this study, the principal leaders are not fully representative of the population of the region as a whole. This presents a further challenge to cultural organizers in Las Vegas. While San Miguel County is nearly 75 percent Hispanic, and includes a large number of young adults, these populations are under-represented among those engaged in organizational leadership.
- The social network analysis included in this study identifies a high degree of geographical disconnect. To be sure, the city of Las Vegas is the central point of regional contact, but the relationships between the city and communities outside it are overly dependent on too few individuals.

- Until very recently, the number of arts and culture-related businesses and non-profit organizations in Las Vegas grew steadily and rapidly. However, total revenues have remained stagnant or declined, and as a result, the average employment and revenues of each organization has declined as well. As in the organizational structure of the community, the business end of arts and culture tends to proliferate in numbers rather than strength.
- The impact of 9/11 on Las Vegas' arts and cultural industries appears to have been very significant. Revenues earned or received by organizations in the area fell sharply beginning in 2002 and have not yet shown evidence of recovery. The impact of the disaster interrupted what had been ten years of steady growth in the region's industry.

Recent efforts to organize the arts and cultural community in Las Vegas have shown a measure of success.

- The Las Vegas Arts Council, the Steering Committee of the newly establishment Arts & Cultural District and MainStreet de Las Vegas measure the highest in BBER's social network analysis in the statistical terms of 'between-ness'. Between-ness refers not directly to the number of mentions but to the effectiveness in linking otherwise disparate or disconnected individuals or organizations. In other words, these types of organizations are effective in creating hubs with the potential to organize the huge number of small, far-flung individuals and organizations that comprise the Las Vegas cultural community.
- These and other organizations have established key events that both draw together members of the community and attract others from outside the area. These events help to establish a common identity within and consistent representation of the region to other areas.

Although many of the measures included in this study emphasize the challenges that Las Vegas faces in developing its arts and cultural economy, the broader message is overwhelmingly positive. The patterns of decentralization described in this study are characteristic of a long history along a path of creative development that is distinct from neighboring regions of New Mexico, such as Santa Fe. In this light, the decentralized structure of the artistic and cultural landscape of present-day Las Vegas does not necessarily reflect radical internal disagreement but rather the many efforts of individuals and institutions to maintain the subtle nuances of an otherwise consistent vision of regional tradition. The current challenge is to organize these many initiatives in order to be more competitive in the emerging regional, national and global cultural economy, while at the same preserving the rich differences that exist within the community. To this end, A&C leaders should continue to work to develop a greater degree of central coordination while preserving the diverse set of organizations that currently exist.

INTRODUCTION

During the period October 2008-April 2009, UNM-BBER conducted a three part investigation of the Arts and Cultural (A&C) economy of Las Vegas, with a focus on an inventory and assessment of the community's cultural assets. The three parts are:

- An extensive inventory of the assets of the creative economy of the Las Vegas area. The information was collected from web searches, secondary and primary data collection, reviews of public documents and prior studies, and interviews with dozens of community leaders, public officials, business owners, artists and interested individuals. The results are available as an Excel[®]-based directory of nearly 500 entries, including descriptions, contact and personnel information, and where available, budget and funding data of A&C institutions and activities.
- A community-based survey of 51 artists, preservationists, supporters, retailers, market representatives and others engaged in creative industries in Las Vegas and neighboring communities. The survey included questions about A&C participation, the advantages and disadvantages of living and working in the Las Vegas area, demographics and, most importantly, relationships with and among A&C and other community institutions. By better understanding the individuals, institutions and relationships that comprise the creative economy, this analysis can help lead to innovation, market expansion, stronger organization, more broad-based participation, and even new models of community leadership.
- An analysis of the impact and trends of the creative economy of the Las Vegas area. This analysis draws from a variety of sources, including lodger's tax records, attendance and enrollment figures, and most importantly, the Dun & Bradstreet database of employment and revenues of businesses and public and non-profit institutions for the period 1989 – 2006. This quantification of the creative economy provides an objective account of the importance of the A&C industries for purposes of policy and planning.

The findings of this research are presented in this report in two main parts. The first is an analysis of the social assets of the creative economy of Las Vegas, including a social network analysis, an evaluation of survey results, and a review of the institutional inventory. The second part includes an analysis of the economic impact of the A&C industries in the area, including an analysis of trends during the 1989-2006 period, and information about the potential market for A&C industries.

SOCIAL ASSETS

Survey Methodology

BBER designed a survey to provide data for the qualitative analysis component of the research project. The survey is included in the Appendix as **Figure A-1**. The survey was designed to elicit information on the demographic characteristics of the A&C community, on the advantages and disadvantages of doing artistic, cultural, and creative work in the Las Vegas area, and on which individuals, organizations, and institutions work with which others.

BBER utilized a snowball sampling method in our qualitative analysis. A snowball sample is a subset of the population under study (in this case, individuals and institutions involved in artistic, creative, and cultural activities in and within 50 miles around Las Vegas) that is generated by members of the population themselves. How this happens, more specifically, is that a handful of members of the population are chosen to serve as “seeds”, each of these is asked to name others within the population as part of the interview, some of whom are then interviewed. These are again asked to name others, some of whom are subsequently interviewed, and so on until a certain percentage of the names that come up have already come up before, at which point it is determined that “saturation” has been reached. While it is very likely the sample thus generated is not representative of the population under study, it is also very likely that it accurately reflects who within the population is most visible and active within it.

An unusual aspect of the survey component of this research project was the involvement of local community members in the process. In an attempt to promote the *creation* of new connections amongst individuals involved in these activities, rather than simply documenting these connections, the five seeds were asked to conduct the subsequent interviews. These five individuals were interviewed by BBER and then trained to conduct interviews themselves. With guidance from BBER (and assistance from one other community member recruited in the eleventh hour to complete necessary interviews), these volunteers conducted 45 of the 51 interviews completed between January and May, 2009.

The findings from the survey are discussed in this section, beginning with the social network analysis.

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis is a type of research that involves analysis of the networks of the study population. Using social network analysis software such as UCINET, which BBER used for this study, one is able to quantify the level of connectedness within the network, assess the relative “importance” (e.g., the extent to which each mediates between others within the network) of each actor within the network, and identify those actors who are isolated from the others, among many other possible analyses. The software also provides a way to

visualize the networks through “maps” whose layouts can be manipulated in several ways to reflect various attributes of the actors.

Data gathered through the survey instrument was used to conduct a social network analysis of the arts and cultural social network in and around Las Vegas. The names of individuals and institutions given by interviewees in response to survey question #6, “Please name in rank order up to five people or institutions with whom your interactions are most important in your arts and cultural activities,” were the names that ultimately served to populate the sample of the arts and cultural universe, and were the pool from which the names of interviewees were pulled. Specifically, the two individuals ranked highest in answer to this question (unless they had already been interviewed or were not Las Vegas-area residents) were the two interviewed next. (The remaining four names were included in the analysis of the entire network.) This pattern was repeated for each interviewee, so that the number of interviewees “snowballed” from the original set.

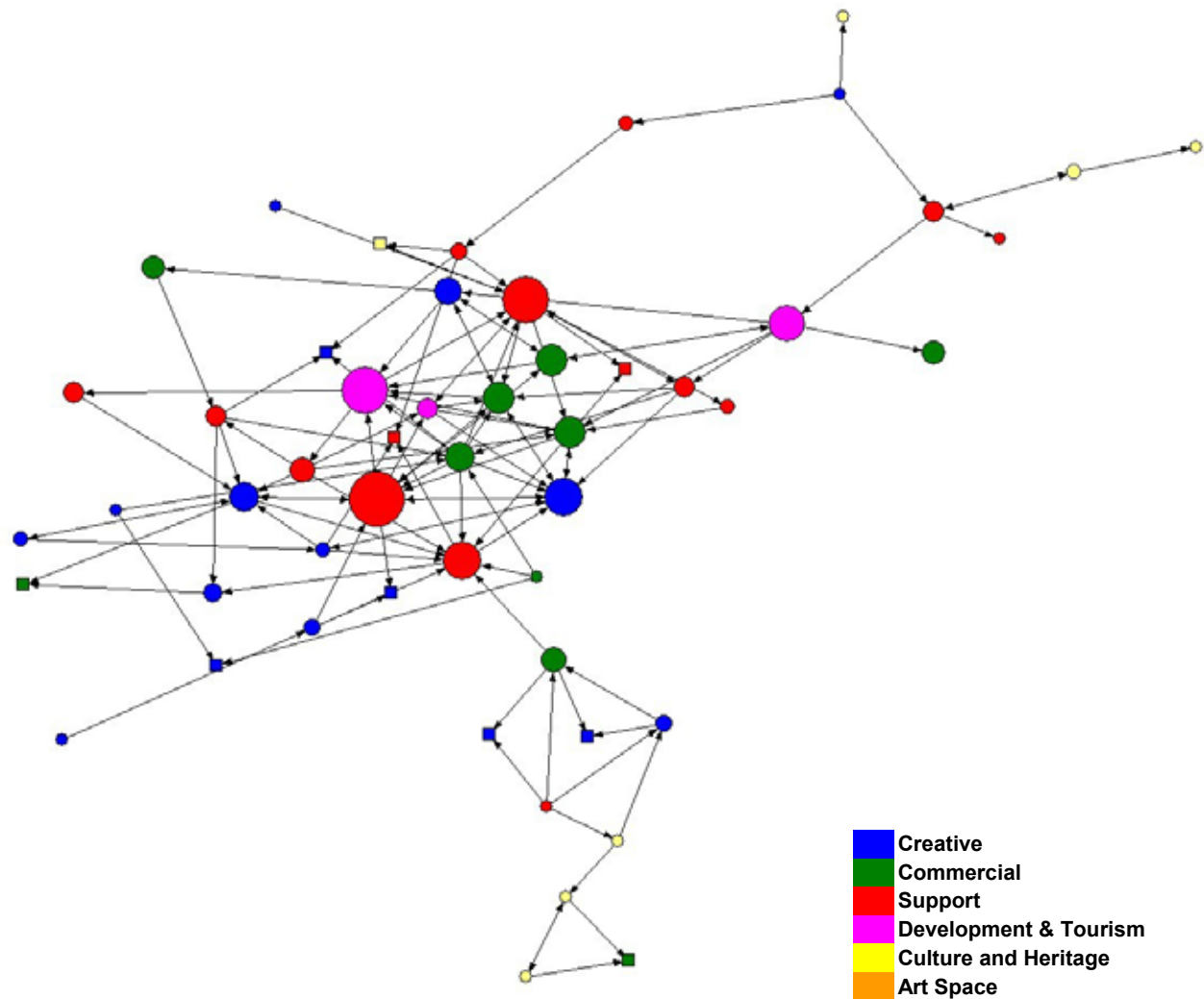
Figures 1 and 2, below, are maps of the arts and cultural social network in the Las Vegas area. The maps show:

1. the individuals or institutions mentioned in response to question # 6 of the survey instrument (“Please name in rank order up to five people or institutions with whom your interactions are most important in your arts and cultural activities.”), minus “pendants”, or individuals or institutions who were only mentioned once by the interviewees.¹ These individuals or institutions are represented by “nodes” in the shape of either circles, which symbolize those who were interviewed, or squares, which symbolize those who were not interviewed.
2. the direction of the mentioning; i.e., the arrow points to the individual or institution referenced by the node at the other end of the arrow; and
3. the level of “between-ness” of the individuals or institutions, as indicated by the size of the node. A node’s between-ness level indicates how much that node mediates between other nodes in the network.

Figure 1 is a map of relationships among individuals and institutions engaged in Las Vegas’s arts and cultural social network, organized according to the nature of one’s involvement. The color of the node indicates the sphere to which the individual or institution belongs. BBER created six different categories of activity, as described in the key following Figure 1. Blue indicates the creative sphere, green is commercial, red is support, pink is development and tourism, yellow is culture and heritage, and orange is art space.

¹ BBER collapsed the individuals into their associated businesses, organizations, or institutions for the maps and between-ness analysis.

FIGURE 1: LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL SOCIAL NETWORK BY SPHERE



KEY TO FIGURE 1

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| | Creative | Activities directly engaged in the conception and production of original art & cultural products. This may include products intended for commercial markets, but excludes replication of non-original work (e.g., replication or manufacturing of established design). |
| | Commercial | Activities that directly or indirectly bring art and cultural products to the market for-profit, or otherwise rely on creative activities for 'content' in commercial activities. Institutions in the commercial sector may include for-profit entertainment companies (e.g., motion picture and sound production studios); media (e.g., broadcast, print, online); venues (e.g., movie theaters, clubs); design, marketing and advertising firms; art galleries; and so on. |
| | Support | Activities that help to make possible the creation, preservation and presentation of original art and cultural products. Support can be material (e.g., public institutions, foundations), educational (e.g., public schools and universities), political (e.g., advocacy), or some other form, with the exception of for-profit activities designated as commercial. |
| | Development & Tourism | Activities that draw upon and/or contribute to a sense of place rooted in arts and culture in order to create markets for arts and cultural activities (e.g. business organizations, tourism promotion, hospitality businesses, land developers). |
| | Culture and Heritage | Activities that preserve and promote the region's culture and history, including institutions (e.g., historical museums) and historic sites, as well as cultural events (e.g., powwows). |
| | Art Space | Activities that provide space for the conception, production, and display of original artistic work, with the exception of for-profit activities designated as commercial. This may include performance spaces, studios, institutions (e.g., art museums), artistic events (e.g., music festivals), or private schools. |

Table 1 shows that of the overall mentions,² the creative sphere dominates, with a full 50 percent of the total. The support sphere is second at 31 percent, with the four remaining spheres mentioned far less often. Of the 175 names generated from the social network analysis survey, 51 were interviewed. A majority (51 percent) of the interviews were conducted with members of the support sphere, followed by the commercial sphere with 22 percent of the total. Of the 175 names, 102 were affiliated with institutions, with the support sector making up the majority of these (56 percent). The remaining 73 names, not surprisingly, are predominately involved in the creative sphere.

The top ten ranked individuals or institutions by level of between-ness are concentrated in the commercial sector (four out of ten), but the support, development and tourism, and creative spheres were not far behind.

In general, these data indicate that the arts and culture social network in the Las Vegas area has a large number of both artists and institutions, yet it appears to be highly decentralized.

² "Mentions" are names of individuals or institutions given in response to survey question #6 who were not interviewed.

TABLE 1: REPRESENTATION OF SPHERES IN THE LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL SOCIAL NETWORK

| SPHERE | MENTIONS | INTERVIEWED | INDIVIDUALS ¹ | INSTITUTIONS ² | BETWEENNESS TOP TEN |
|-----------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Creative | 62 | 3 | 61 | 4 | 1 |
| Commercial | 10 | 11 | 1 | 20 | 4 |
| Support | 38 | 26 | 7 | 57 | 3 |
| Development & Tourism | 2 | 5 | 0 | 7 | 2 |
| Culture and Heritage | 11 | 6 | 4 | 13 | 0 |
| Art Space | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 124 | 51 | 73 | 102 | 10 |

| SPHERE | MENTIONS | INTERVIEWED | INDIVIDUALS ¹ | INSTITUTIONS ² | BETWEENNESS TOP TEN |
|-----------------------|----------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Creative | 50% | 6% | 84% | 4% | 10% |
| Commercial | 8% | 22% | 1% | 20% | 40% |
| Support | 31% | 51% | 10% | 56% | 30% |
| Development & Tourism | 2% | 10% | 0% | 7% | 20% |
| Culture and Heritage | 9% | 12% | 5% | 13% | 0% |
| Art Space | 1% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 0% |
| TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

¹ "Individuals" means persons who are not known to be affiliated with an arts or cultural institution.

² "Institutions" means organizations, agencies, or businesses engaged in artistic or cultural activities that were either mentioned as such, or to which BBER assigned individuals who are known to be affiliated with them.

Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005-2007 average; UNM-BBER, 2009.

Table 2 presents the 25 individuals or institutions with the highest between-ness ranking of the 175 total. Between-ness is but one of several “centrality” measures that seek to quantify an actor’s prominence within a social network. Between-ness, as mentioned above, measures the degree to which an actor falls along the paths of, or lies between, other actors within the network and can indicate individuals or institutions that are in a good position to mediate between others within the network. Degree centrality essentially reflects the popularity of the actor, to the degree that that actor is mentioned (“in-degree”). So in the case of the Las Vegas arts and cultural social network, the Las Vegas Arts Council has the highest between-ness ranking and third highest in-degree ranking, meaning that this organization mediates amongst the most others within the network and that it (or individuals affiliated with it) was the third-most often referenced actor in the network.

That the top three institutions by between-ness ranking are focused on artistic and cultural support is not surprising, given the mission of these institutions; yet this ranking indicates that their outreach efforts are successful. What is surprising is the number of artists within the top 25 between-ness rankings, especially the

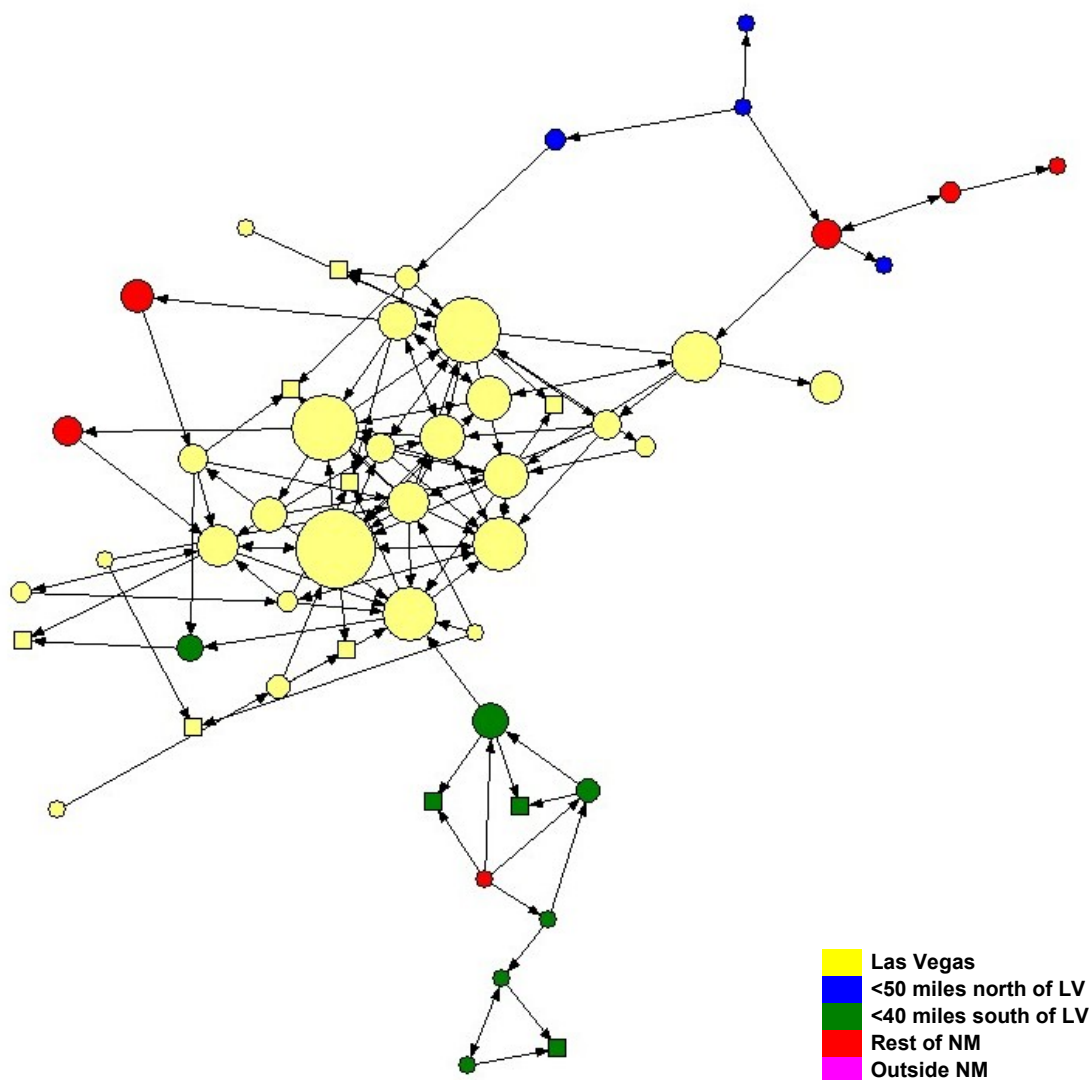
one ranked fourth (and first in the in- degree ranking). This indicates how valued the local artists are within the social network.

TABLE 2: RANKINGS OF INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS BY SPHERE, GEOGRAPHY AND SELECTED MEASURES OF CENTRALITY

| INDIVIDUAL / INSTITUTION | BETWEEN- NESS RANK | DEGREE RANK | SPHERE | GEO- GRAPHY |
|--|--------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Las Vegas Arts Council | 1 | 3 | Support | Las Vegas |
| Arts and Cultural District Steering Cmte | 2 | 5 | Devel & Tour | Las Vegas |
| MainStreet de Las Vegas | 3 | 6 | Support | Las Vegas |
| Artist | 4 | 1 | Creative | Las Vegas |
| New Mexico Highlands University | 5 | 2 | Support | Las Vegas |
| Las Vegas - San Miguel EDC | 6 | 15 | Devel & Tour | Las Vegas |
| Blue Barn Gallery | 7 | 10 | Commercial | Las Vegas |
| Tito's Gallery | 8 | 7 | Commercial | Las Vegas |
| Wardancer Designs and Gallery | 9 | 4 | Commercial | Las Vegas |
| Gallinas magazine | 10 | 9 | Commercial | Las Vegas |
| Artist | 11 | 8 | Creative | Las Vegas |
| Artist | 12 | 11 | Creative | Las Vegas |
| El Ancon Sculpture Park | 13 | 16 | Commercial | Ribera |
| United World College | 14 | 32 | Support | Las Vegas |
| Art Essentials Gallery | 15 | 33 | Commercial | Las Vegas |
| Taos Artisan Coop | 16 | 34 | Commercial | Taos |
| Rio Gallinas School | 17 | 17 | Support | Las Vegas |
| New Mexico MainStreet | 18 | 35 | Support | Santa Fe |
| Chamber of Commerce | 19 | 18 | Support | Las Vegas |
| North Central New Mexico EDC | 20 | 19 | Support | Santa Fe |
| Plaza Hotel | 21 | 12 | Devel & Tour | Las Vegas |
| Artist | 22 | 20 | Creative | Tecolote |
| Luna Community College | 23 | 36 | Support | Las Vegas |
| La Sala Pottery | 24 | 21 | Creative | Ribera |
| Artist | 25 | 37 | Creative | Las Vegas |

Source: UNM-BBER, 2009.

Figure 2 is the same network with the colors changed to represent the geographic location of each node. In this map, yellow represents those individuals or institutions that are located within Las Vegas; blue indicates those located within 50 miles north of Las Vegas, and includes individuals or institutions in Mora, Rociada, El Pueblo, Guadalupita, and Pendaries; green symbolizes those located within 40 miles of Las Vegas to the south, including those in Ribera, Tecolote, Villanueva, San Augustin, and San Jose; red nodes are located elsewhere in New Mexico, including Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Taos, Tijeras, and Pecos; and pink represents those located outside the state, all five of which are not included in Figure 2 because they were pendants.

FIGURE 2: LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL SOCIAL NETWORK BY GEORGRAPHY

Looking at the geographic location of the major players in the network (as shown in Figure 2 and Table 2), Las Vegas certainly is the center of the action; however, the surrounding region definitely contributes to the mix. BBER made great efforts to include the surrounding region in this study by recruiting two community volunteers who live outside of Las Vegas, in the Mora and Ribera areas. The individuals these volunteers spoke to (twelve, total), with a few exceptions, predominately identified individuals within their geographic area, rather than individuals located in Las Vegas proper. By the culmination of the surveys, the two regions did eventually connect to the core in Las Vegas, but the connections were weak. Forging stronger connections to the surrounding region could serve to bolster the entire region's creative economy.

Participant Demographics

Table 3 summarizes the demographic data provided by the 51 individuals who were interviewed for this study and compares it to the demographics of San Miguel County as a whole. The purpose is to gauge the representativeness of the participants in the study with respect to the population of the county as a whole. Additionally, because the methodology was designed to solicit the leaders of the arts & cultural community to participate in the study, this analysis is more broadly suggestive of representativeness of these leaders of the community.

The table is divided according to gender, ethnicity, age, and time in area, respectively. The first columns show the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents; the next two columns show the corresponding information for the population of San Miguel County as a whole. Chi square measures the degree of difference of the proportions of the two.

Beginning with gender, 61 percent of respondents were female, higher than the female proportion of the county population. However, the Chi square value of 1.99 is well below the critical value of 3.84, indicating that the difference in participation is not very significant (i.e., one cannot be 95 percent sure that the difference is more than random).

Ethnicity and age of respondents, however, are significantly different from that of the population. While less than one quarter of the population of the county is non-Hispanic, fully 55 percent of those who participated in the study (and were identified as important to their work by other participants) were non-Hispanic. The Chi square value reveals the significance of the difference, as it far exceeds the critical value signifying the point of 95 percent confidence that the difference is non-random. Similarly, the age of the participants is highly unrepresentative of the age of community members.³ Specifically, the participants in the study are significantly older than the overall population. In the study, only 8 percent of the participants were between 20 and 39 years of age, whereas 44 percent were 60 years of age or older. Yet, in the total population, persons in the younger cohort substantially outnumber those of the older cohort.

At the bottom of the table are ranges of the time spent by participants in the study in the Las Vegas area. Unfortunately, comparable information for the county population is not available. However, it is generally acknowledged that the vast majority of the population has spent much of their lives in region, while fully one-third of the participants in the study are relatively new to the area.

As in any survey study, there is a possibility that the methodology used to identify survey participants is, itself, biased, such that the results indicate as much about the methodology as the actual population. In this case, we used a 'snowball' sample to identify participants – i.e., participants themselves define the

³ By design, this study did not include persons under 20 years of age. The age of the respondents is thus compared to similar cohorts of the population, from age 20 and older.

population to be surveyed. The advantage of this 'participant-driven' design is that it anticipates bias and makes it the subject of the study. In other words, the purpose of the study is to reveal how the community itself identifies its participants and leaders. Thus, while it is certainly true that the results may be an inaccurate reflection of the participation of the entire community, there is little doubt that the results are an accurate reflection of the self-identification of the leadership of the arts and cultural community.

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS TO TOTAL POPULATION OF SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

| | RESPONDENTS ¹ | | SAN MIGUEL COUNTY | | EXPECTED | CHI SQ | D.F. |
|------------------------|--------------------------|------|-------------------|------|----------|--------------|--------------|
| GENDER | | | | | | | |
| Female | 31 | 61% | 14,684 | 51% | 26.0 | 0.98 | |
| Male | 20 | 39% | 14,162 | 49% | 25.0 | 1.01 | |
| | 51 | 100% | 28,846 | 100% | 51 | 1.99 | 1 |
| | | | | | | 3.84 | .95 critical |
| ETHNICITY | | | | | | | |
| Anglo | 25 | 49% | 5,483 | 19% | 10 | 24.17 | |
| Hispanic | 23 | 45% | 22,308 | 77% | 39 | 6.85 | |
| Other | 3 | 6% | 1,055 | 4% | 2 | 0.69 | |
| | 51 | 100% | 28,846 | 100% | 51 | 31.71 | 3 |
| | | | | | | 7.82 | .95 critical |
| AGE² | | | | | | | |
| 20-39 | 4 | 8% | 7,032 | 34% | 17 | 9.71 | |
| 40-59 | 24 | 48% | 8,553 | 41% | 20 | 0.64 | |
| >59 | 22 | 44% | 5,399 | 26% | 13 | 6.49 | |
| | 50 | 100% | 20,984 | 100% | 50 | 16.84 | 3 |
| | | | | | | 7.82 | .95 critical |
| TIME IN AREA | | | | | | | |
| <10 years | 17 | 33% | | | | | |
| 10-19 years | 7 | 14% | | | | | |
| >20 years | 17 | 33% | | | | | |
| Lifetime | 10 | 20% | | | | | |
| | 51 | 100% | | | | | |

¹ "Respondents" means those who were interviewed

² One respondent declined to identify age.

Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005-2007 average; UNM-BBER, 2009.

Institutions and Organizations

The 51 members of the Las Vegas area arts and cultural community who participated in the survey were asked to identify organizations with which they were involved. The results of these references suggest a highly decentralization organizational structure to Las Vegas' arts and cultural community. The 51 participants made 134 references. Of these, 64 different organizations were mentioned only once; another 15 organizations were mentioned twice; only 6

organizations were mentioned three or four times, and only two (Las Vegas Arts Council and MainStreet de Las Vegas) were mentioned 10 or more times. This contrasts sharply with the results from Silver City, where only a few organizations dominated the listings.

As **Table 4** shows, the decentralized organizational structure in Las Vegas was reflected in all populations – Hispanic and Anglos, men and women, persons of all age groups and varying periods of time in Las Vegas are equally likely to reference participation in both far-flung, seldom mentioned organizations and in the principal organizations in the community (Las Vegas Arts Council, MainStreet de Las Vegas, and Luna Community College).

TABLE 4: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS IDENTIFIED WITH VARIOUS CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN LAS VEGAS AREA

| ORGANIZATION | TOTAL | ETHNICITY | | | TIME IN LAS VEGAS AREA | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|
| | | Hispanic | Anglo | Other | <10 years | 10-19 years | 20+ years | Lifetime |
| Las Vegas Arts Council | 14 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| MainStreet de Las Vegas | 10 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Luna Community College | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Casa de Cultura | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Citizen's Committee for Historic Preservation | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Gallinas Magazine | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Las Vegas/San Miguel Chamber of Commerce | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Old Town Commercial Club | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 15 organizations were referenced twice | | | | | | | | |
| 64 organizations were referenced once | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 43 | 17 | 20 | 6 | 17 | 4 | 14 | 8 |

| ORGANIZATION | TOTAL | ETHNICITY | | | TIME IN LAS VEGAS AREA | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|
| | | Hispanic | Anglo | Other | <10 years | 10-19 years | 20+ years | Lifetime |
| Las Vegas Arts Council | 14 | 36% | 57% | 7% | 50% | 7% | 29% | 14% |
| MainStreet de Las Vegas | 10 | 40% | 40% | 20% | 40% | 10% | 30% | 20% |
| Luna Community College | 4 | 75% | 0% | 25% | 0% | 0% | 25% | 75% |
| Casa de Cultura | 3 | 67% | 33% | 0% | 33% | 0% | 67% | 0% |
| Citizen's Committee for Historic Preservation | 3 | 33% | 67% | 0% | 33% | 33% | 33% | 0% |
| Gallinas Magazine | 3 | 0% | 67% | 33% | 67% | 0% | 33% | 0% |
| Las Vegas/San Miguel Chamber of Commerce | 3 | 0% | 67% | 33% | 67% | 0% | 33% | 0% |
| Old Town Commercial Club | 3 | 67% | 33% | 0% | 0% | 33% | 33% | 33% |
| 15 organizations were referenced twice | | | | | | | | |
| 64 organizations were referenced once | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 43 | 17 | 20 | 6 | 17 | 4 | 14 | 8 |

Source: UNM-BBER, 2009.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages

Table 5 shows the responses of the 51 community members who completed the survey to the question, "Please name in rank order three advantages and three disadvantages of working in the arts & cultural field in Silver City". Along with the collaborative nature of the arts and culture community, those surveyed cited the location and ambiance of the area as providing the greatest advantage to working in Las Vegas. Most often cited was the area's natural beauty.

Interestingly, as in other towns we have studied, there was disagreement over the extent of collaboration within the arts and culture community. It was cited as the greatest disadvantage and was in a weighted tie for greatest advantage. Disadvantages mainly concern Las Vegas' geographic isolation and the financial issues associated with working in a small community – lack of funding, small markets, and limited facilities.

TABLE 5: PERCEIVED ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF WORKING IN ARTS AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN LAS VEGAS AREA

| Advantages | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Location/Ambiance | 17 | 7 | 7 |
| Collaborative | 8 | 6 | 9 |
| Rich Cultural Traditions | 10 | 7 | 1 |
| Supportive | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| Room to Grow | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Good Quality of Life | 4 | 3 | 6 |
| Small | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Low Cost of Living | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Variety of Art | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| Artistic Talent Level | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Isolated | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Artistic Freedom | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Disadvantages | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
| Lack of Collaboration | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Isolated | 9 | 8 | 5 |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 8 | 8 | 4 |
| Lack of Art Facilities and Venues | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| Small Town | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Small Market | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| Lack of Arts Education | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Fear of Change | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Prejudiced | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Lack of Funding | 1 | 0 | 5 |

Source: UNM-BBER, 2009, based on community survey.

Directory of Arts and Cultural Activities

Table 6 is a summary of the directory BBER has assembled of individuals and institutions involved in artistic, creative, or cultural activities in the Las Vegas area. The summary of the entire directory is organized according to legal status and area of activity. This summary is not intended to be a comprehensive account of activities or organizations, but provides information that was used to structure much of the study.

The complete directory includes 309 entries, including addresses for 292 entries; phone numbers for 212; e-mail addresses for 106; funding sources for 36; budget

information for 24; and information on the management structure for 101 businesses and organizations.

In order to maintain consistency, we used the “universe” of arts and culture institutions and activities BBER established for our Albuquerque arts and culture study. These categories were formed along the lines of standard industrial classifications established by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For example, we established the category of “artist” to include artists, musicians, actors, dancers and all others directly involved in creating visual or performing arts, literature and film.

The directory includes artists or institutions that have a basic internet presence. This does not necessarily mean a web page specifically, but it means that at some point, the artist or institution is mentioned in some capacity on the internet. This could mean an actual artist’s website, or it could mean a mention in an arts council’s newsletter. Initial research began with basic internet searches of natural gateways into a community’s arts and culture activities. For example chambers of commerce or art association websites. Over time this produced a kind of “snowball effect” whereby one internet link would lead to another and so on to build our arts and culture directory. The directory also includes artists and institutions that may not have a web presence but have been referred to us by individuals within the community as important to local arts and culture. While internet research formed the majority of the directory, we sought input from the community on arts and culture activities.

We caution that the directory is not comprehensive. We did not want to systematically bias out certain art fields or institutions, but we certainly did not expect to account for absolutely everything. Our goal was a thorough examination of a community’s arts and culture activities for the purposes of our own understanding. The directory was the foundation for our social network analysis.

TABLE 6: ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN LAS VEGAS AND NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES, BY ACTIVITY AND LEGAL STATUS

| | INDIVIDUAL | PRIVATE FOR-PROFIT | PRIVATE NON-PROFIT | PUBLIC | TOTAL |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Artists ¹ | 86 | 1 | 5 | | 92 |
| Art event ² | | | 17 | | 17 |
| Retail ³ | | 38 | | | 38 |
| Art gallery | | 22 | | 1 | 23 |
| Education | | | 6 | 29 | 35 |
| Accommodations | | 8 | | | 8 |
| Arts advocacy | | | 9 | | 9 |
| Cultural preservation | | | 13 | | 13 |
| Restaurant | | 12 | | | 12 |
| Performance space | | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Media ⁴ | 2 | 7 | 1 | | 10 |
| Outdoor recreation | | | 1 | 16 | 17 |
| Architecture | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Technology | 1 | 3 | 2 | | 6 |
| Library/museum | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Government ⁵ | | | | 2 | 2 |
| Sports | | 1 | | 2 | 3 |
| Other | 13 | 1 | | | 14 |
| TOTAL | 102 | 97 | 57 | 53 | 309 |

1 Artists include all media, dance, fiber arts, jewelry making, musicians, painters, photographers, potters, sculptors, writers, and makers of nichos, retablos and santeros.

2 Describes annual or continuous art showings and/or performance series.

3 Describes book stores, music stores, art supply stores, or any place that sells or displays local art, but cannot be described as a gallery.

4 Includes any local newspapers, magazines, websites, blogs, radio, and tv stations that cater specifically to disseminating local news or information.

5 Includes local and regional government agencies that support arts and culture activities.

Source: UNM-BBER, 2009

ECONOMIC MARKETS

Arts and Cultural Businesses

Table 7, on the following page, provides data on the number of establishments, employees, and sales of arts and culture-related businesses (with employees) in San Miguel County for the years 1990, 2000, and 2007.⁴ **Figure 3** shows the total number of A&C establishments and revenues (in constant 2008 dollars) for the years 1989 through 2006. **Figure 4** again shows revenues in constant dollars, but with the average number of employees in A&C business, for the period 1989-2006. The source of the information is Dun & Bradstreet.

Most significantly, these figures show a very significant decline in revenues during the period 2001-2006. Although there is no evidence to document this, it is not unreasonable to assume that this trend is associated with the tragic events of September 11, 2001, which affected travel patterns and public investment, if not the cultural environment of the country.⁵

A careful examination of the figures reveals the response of businesses to the crisis. **Figure 3** shows that, following a lag of about two years, the decline in revenues was matched by A&C business failures, with the number of establishments eventually declining from 162 to 132 over the five year period. **Figure 4** shows that the more immediate response to falling revenues was for businesses to reduce their payroll by cutting the number of employees. A somewhat more optimistic indication is that the average number of employees among establishments that remained open quickly stabilized and indeed has increased. One interpretation of these patterns is that the post-9/11 decline in revenues was devastating to some of the weak – perhaps newer – businesses, but that businesses that remained open are more viable and have weathered the storm.

Returning to **Table 7**, we see that these dynamics have, with only a few exceptions, affected most sectors of the creative economy in San Miguel County. The largest sector, by far, is higher education,⁶ which accounts for about one-third of both employment and revenues. Apart from education, there are several substantial sectors, including religious organizations, publishers, specialty retailers (galleries, books, recreational industries, musical instructions and so on), craft manufacturers, antique merchants, and broadcasters. Of these, only publishers have seen an increase in revenues over the five year period.

⁴ The categories in Table 7 generally follow those that BBER used in our study of Albuquerque arts and cultural industries. We are very inclusive in developing these categories – think of them as creative industries, rather than arts & culture in a more narrow sense.

⁵ Very similar patterns are evident in Silver City, NM. Until better information is available, it is very difficult to determine whether this pattern is part of a national trend, or instead is specific to the southwest region or perhaps small towns.

⁶ Higher education figures are estimates of only activities associated with arts and humanities. These estimates are based on a careful survey of teaching credit hours by department among area colleges and universities.

TABLE 7: BUSINESSES, EMPLOYMENT AND REVENUES OF ARTS & CULTURE RELATED BUSINESSES IN SAN MIGUEL COUNTY, 1990, 2000 AND 2006.

| | 1990 | | | 2000 | | | 2007 | | |
|---|------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| | Businesses | Employees | Revenues | Businesses | Employees | Revenues | Businesses | Employees | Revenues |
| Craft Manufacturing | 10 | 37 | 2,550,509 | 11 | 28 | 2,145,951 | 12 | 36 | 1,674,302 |
| Retailers (books, musical instr) | 16 | 44 | 3,391,430 | 19 | 51 | 3,640,138 | 19 | 37 | 2,025,693 |
| Antiques | 6 | 11 | 957,718 | 14 | 33 | 3,018,361 | 13 | 38 | 1,894,856 |
| Publishers | 3 | 24 | 1,595,040 | 2 | 30 | 1,432,599 | 3 | 31 | 2,417,270 |
| Software | 1 | 2 | 274,693 | 3 | 5 | 597,646 | 3 | 6 | 550,347 |
| Motion Picture and Video Industries | 3 | 11 | 1,447,123 | 1 | 7 | 400,098 | 4 | 10 | 503,620 |
| Radio and Television Broadcasting | 3 | 34 | 1,792,672 | 2 | 14 | 450,110 | 4 | 27 | 1,003,709 |
| Libraries | 2 | 8 | 272,880 | 2 | 9 | 270,066 | 3 | 12 | 237,272 |
| Architects | 4 | 6 | 349,242 | 7 | 23 | 1,497,865 | 3 | 3 | 171,958 |
| Design | 5 | 14 | 985,566 | 8 | 13 | 1,365,222 | 6 | 8 | 368,836 |
| Photography | 3 | 12 | 776,786 | 5 | 8 | 550,134 | 2 | 3 | 147,971 |
| Art Instruction | 0 | - | - | 1 | 1 | 54,763 | 0 | - | - |
| Higher Education -- Arts & Humanities | 2 | 97 | 6,524,865 | 2 | 184 | 17,428,911 | 1 | 183 | 11,136,109 |
| Performing Arts Companies | 1 | 1 | 54,543 | 1 | 1 | 53,138 | 3 | 7 | 257,521 |
| Independent Artists, Writers & Performers | 2 | 2 | 124,411 | 4 | 5 | 384,094 | 3 | 3 | 163,027 |
| Museums, Historical Sites | 1 | 1 | 55,532 | 0 | - | - | 1 | 2 | 103,839 |
| Recreation Industries | 5 | 17 | 1,429,954 | 4 | 14 | 2,130,895 | 10 | 23 | 2,089,825 |
| Religious Organizations | 25 | 145 | 6,900,611 | 27 | 90 | 3,667,769 | 31 | 71 | 2,528,690 |
| Grantmaking and Giving Services | 1 | 4 | 520,549 | 2 | 9 | 1,525,622 | 0 | - | - |
| Social Advocacy Organizations | 6 | 18 | 1,263,720 | 11 | 79 | 4,009,103 | 11 | 47 | 994,882 |
| TOTAL | 99 | 488 | 31,267,845 | 126 | 604 | 44,622,484 | 132 | 547 | 28,269,727 |
| Share of San Miguel TOTAL | 13.2% | 7.8% | 5.9% | 12.4% | 6.7% | 6.2% | 11.6% | 5.9% | 5.4% |

Source: Dun & Bradstreet; summary by UNM-BBER, 2009.

FIGURE 3: ESTABLISHMENTS AND REVENUES IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN SAN MIGUEL COUNTY, 1989
- 2006

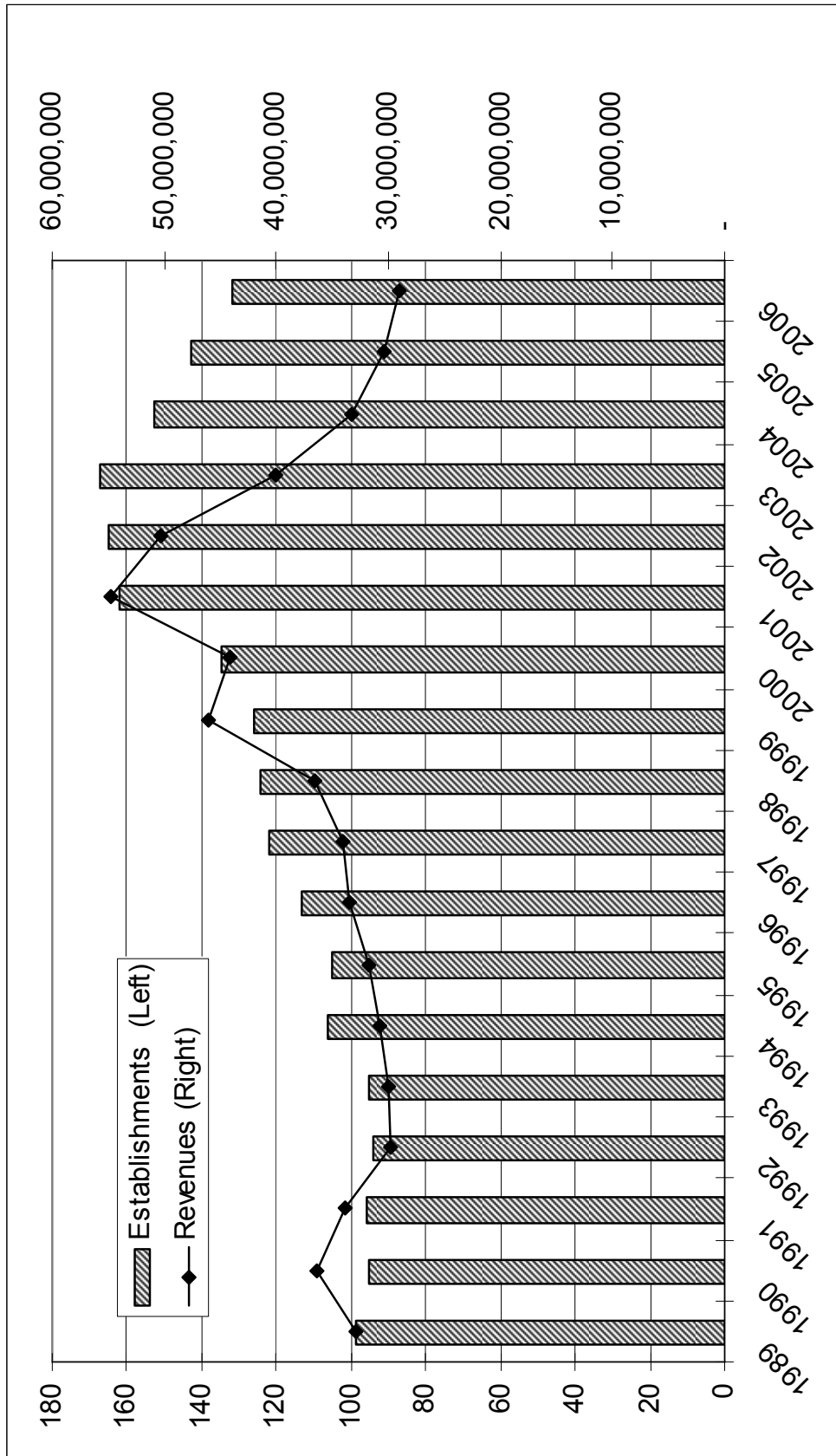
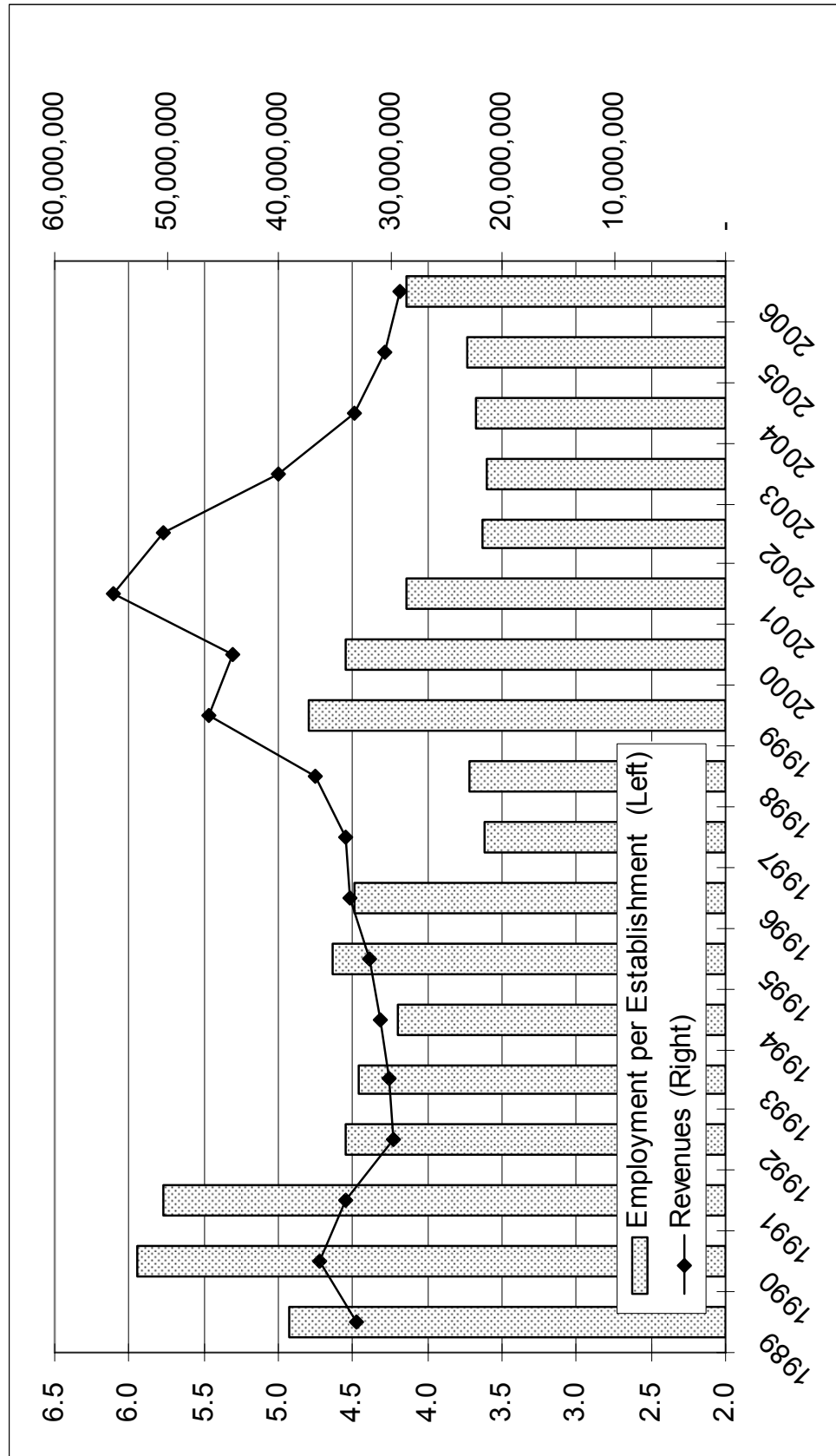


FIGURE 4: EMPLOYMENT PER ESTABLISHMENT AND REVENUES IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN SAN MIGUEL COUNTY, 1989 - 2006



Economic Impact of Tourism

Table 8 and **Figure 5** display lodger's tax revenues for Las Vegas and San Miguel County for fiscal years 2000 through 2008. Overall, the figures show that following a drop after 9/11, lodger's taxes in Las Vegas were relatively flat and declining relative to the state total, until FY2007 (July 2006 through June 2007) when growth resumed in both absolute and relative terms.

Because Las Vegas is located along I-25, these figures must be carefully interpreted, as lodger's taxes are a reflection of both highway traffic (and Las Vegas' attraction to these travelers) and travelers who make Las Vegas a destination. To access these patterns, we analyze Las Vegas' performance relative to that of Raton, 100 miles to north along I-25.

Figure 6 shows Las Vegas' lodger's tax revenues, per point of the tax rate, as a percentage of that of Raton.⁷ In general, revenues in Las Vegas are somewhat lower than in Raton, possibly because of geographical advantages to highway travelers offered by Raton (i.e., it is more of a midway point between major destinations such as Albuquerque/Santa Fe and Denver). Further, the chart shows that changes in travel patterns following 9/11 had a significantly greater impact on Las Vegas, but in the past two years the town's share of revenues has begun to recover. Although speculative, one may suggest that Las Vegas gathers a relatively greater share of revenues from destination travelers, particularly from Albuquerque and visitors to Santa Fe, and this segment of the market for accommodations are more responsive to underlying changes in the travel environment.

According to a 2006 estimate by the Travel Industry Association (TIA), based on the association's Travel Economic Impact Model, travelers spend \$52 million per year in San Miguel County, generating 0.6 jobs, \$8,500 in wages and salaries, and \$840 thousand in local tax revenues. Although county-specific estimates are highly imprecise, this model places San Miguel County 21st among 33 counties in New Mexico in terms of expenditures per capita.

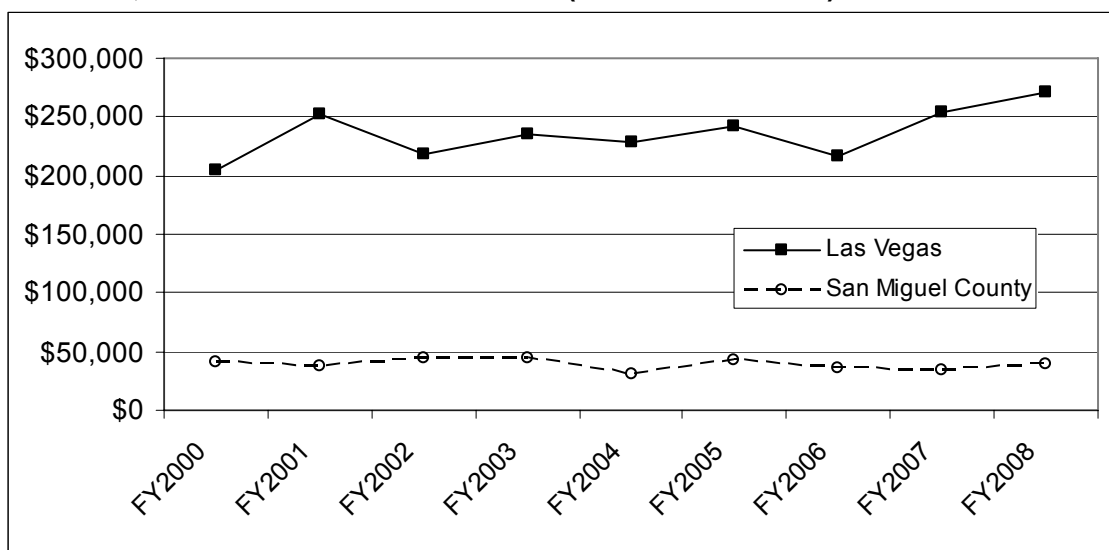
⁷ Las Vegas' lodger's tax rate is 4 percent, and Raton's rate is 5 percent. This figure removes this difference by comparing revenues for a single point of the tax rate.

TABLE 8: LODGER'S TAX REVENUES FOR LAS VEGAS AND SAN MIGUEL COUNTY, FISCAL YEARS 2000-2008. (All Values \$2008)

| | Las Vegas | San Miguel County |
|---------------|-----------|----------------------|
| FY2000 | 204,324 | 40,675 |
| FY2001 | 252,809 | 37,628 |
| FY2002 | 217,536 | 43,974 |
| FY2003 | 234,630 | 43,531 |
| FY2004 | 228,834 | 30,223 |
| FY2005 | 242,161 | 42,602 |
| FY2006 | 215,776 | 36,341 |
| FY2007 | 254,007 | 33,476 |
| FY2008 | 271,158 | 38,485 |

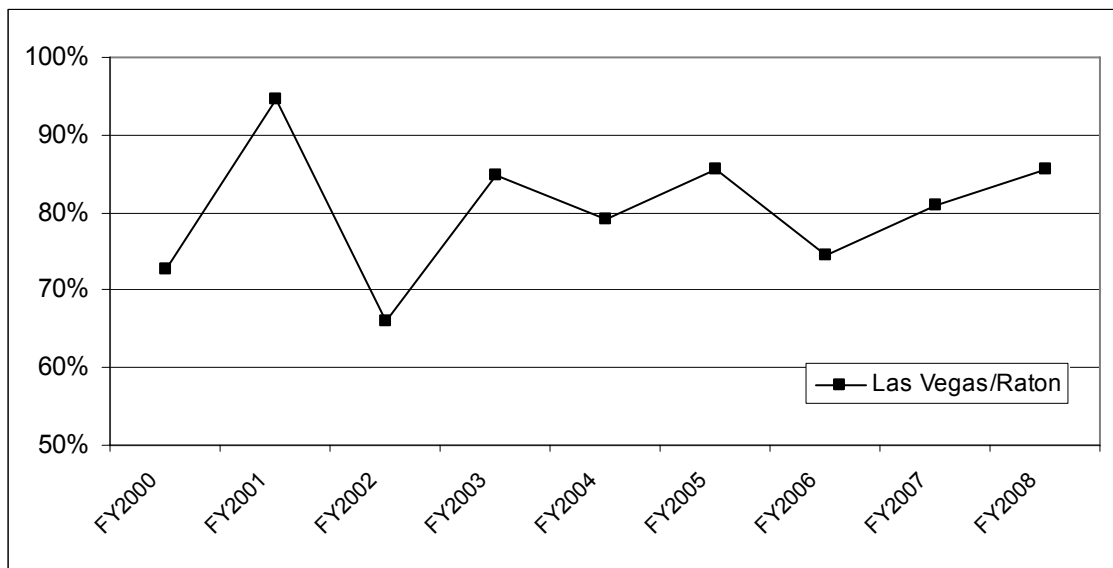
Source: New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, Local Government Division.

Note: Lodger's tax rate for Las Vegas is 5 percent; rate for San Miguel County was 3 percent in FY 2000 and 2001, and 5 percent beginning in 2002.

FIGURE 5: LODGER'S TAX REVENUES FOR LAS VEGAS AND SAN MIGUEL COUNTY, FISCAL YEARS 2000-2008. (All Values \$2008)

Source: New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, Local Government Division.

Note: Lodger's Tax rate for Las Vegas is 4 percent for all years; rate for San Miguel County was 3 percent for FY 2000 and 2001, and was increased to 5 percent beginning 2002.

FIGURE 6: LAS VEGAS LODGER'S TAX REVENUES PER TAX POINT AS A PERCENTAGE OF RATON LODGER'S TAX REVENUES, FISCAL YEARS 2000-2008

Source: New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, Local Government Division. Calculations by UNM-BBER, 2009.

Note: Lodger's Tax rate for Las Vegas is 4 percent for all years; rate for San Miguel County was 3 percent for FY 2000 and 2001, and was increased to 5 percent beginning 2002.

Table 9 displays visitor center statistics from the Las Vegas/San Miguel Chamber of Commerce from July 2008 through April 2009.

TABLE 9: LAS VEGAS VISITOR'S CENTER STATISTICS

| | July-December 08 | January-April 09 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Visitor Center Walk-ins | 3,201 | 1,357 |
| Chamber Walk-ins | 234 | 73 |
| CHAMBER STATISTICS | | |
| Las Vegas/ San Miguel Chamber of Commerce Requests: | 1,248 | |
| Reader Response Cards filled out | 514 | 299 |
| Tourist Requests by Phone | 90 | 62 |
| Tourist Requests by Mail | 16 | 16 |
| Tourist Requests by E-mail | 13 | 9 |
| Relocation Requests by Phone/Mail/E-mail | 9 | 4 |
| Conference Packets Mailed | 216 | 0 |

Source: Las Vegas/San Miguel Chamber of Commerce, 2009.

Markets for Arts and Cultural Events

The data in **Table 10** on the following page was collected by BBER through interviews with various organizations, and consists of some actual counts as well as estimates by personnel. The Rough Rider Motorcycle Rally is one of the most significant draws to the area with approximately 12 to 15,000 attendees in 2008.⁸ Fort Union National Monument is also a significant draw with 9,171 visitors last year.⁹ The events sponsored by the Las Vegas Arts Council were the largest source of arts and culture attendance in the area with at least 1,300 attendees.¹⁰ This is not counting the People's Faire whose attendance numbers are also significant.

⁸ Source: Rough Riders Motorcycle Rally lead organizer, March, 2009

⁹ Source: Fort Union National Monument Director, March, 2009

¹⁰ Source: MainStreet Arts and Culture District Application-Las Vegas, 2007; Summary by UNM-BBER, 2009

TABLE 10: MARKETS FOR CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND EVENTS IN THE LAS VEGAS AREA

| ORGANIZATION/EVENT | ATTENDANCE / PARTICIPATION (Est.) | FREQUENCY OF EVENT | PREDOMINANT GEOGRAPHICAL SOURCE OF ATTENDEES |
|---|---|--------------------|---|
| Las Vegas Arts Council Las Vegas Celebrates the Arts Studio Tour <i>participants</i> | 30 artists approx. 500 attendees | annual | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Altered Alters Regional Art Exhibition <i>participants</i> | 40-45 artists 125 opening attendees; 100 show attendees | annual | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Regional High School Art Competition <i>participants</i> | approx. 100 works exhibited; 10 volunteers 100-200 reception attendees; approx. 600 show attendees | annual | Northern NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Adult Drawing Class | 24 participants | continuous | Las Vegas Area |
| Chicken River Writers | 4 participants | continuous | Las Vegas Area |
| Colores de Corazon Fiber Arts Show | | continuous | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Tinwork Class | | continuous | Las Vegas Area |
| Tuesday Sketch Group | 2 participants | continuous | Las Vegas Area |
| Wednesday Watercolor Group | | continuous | Las Vegas Area |
| Writing as Therapy | | continuous | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Children's Summer Art Class | | continuous | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Faces of Women | | continuous | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Jack Glatzer Show | 13 participants | annual | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Las Peliculas Film Festival | 52 artists 50-60 attendees | annual | NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Outreach Summer Concert Series | approx. 100 attendees | annual | Northern NM; Las Vegas Area |
| People's Faire | 65 vendors, 7 performing groups | annual | Las Vegas Area |
| Missoula Children's Theater | 70 participants | annual | Northern NM; Las Vegas Area |
| Rough Rider Motorcycle Rally | 12-15,000 attendees | annual | NM; Las Vegas Area; TX, CO, NV, AZ |
| MainStreet de Las Vegas Second Saturday Artwalk | 100-150 attendees | continuous | Las Vegas area |
| Fort Union National Monument | 91,71 visitors ² | continuous | None predominant |
| Las Vegas Museum | 3,192 visitors ² | continuous | 1670 ² |
| Historic Accommodations in A&C District El Fidel Hotel ¹ | 10% occupancy rate for "overnight" rooms ¹ Jan09- 48%; Feb09- 43%; Mar09- 45%; Apr09- 41% occupancy 65% to 72% occupancy rate | continuous | NM |
| Inn on the Santa Fe Trail Plaza Hotel | | continuous | Mostly NM; summer months from TX summer months |
| Las Vegas/San Miguel Chamber of Commerce | city-wide | continuous | None predominant |

¹ El Fidel is mostly an extended stay hotel. 10 of their 17 rooms are rented out as apartments.² 2008

APPENDIX

FIGURE A-1: LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

University of New Mexico

Verbal Informed Consent for Surveys

A Study of Arts and Cultural Districts in New Mexico MainStreet Communities

The University of New Mexico's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) is conducting a research study with the support of the New Mexico MainStreet program and in collaboration with members of your community. The purpose of the study is to inventory the artistic, cultural, and creative assets in New Mexico. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as a person involved in art, culture, creative, or cultural tourism activities in your community.

Your participation will involve answering several questions. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can also refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. The survey includes questions such as "What are three advantages of working in the arts & cultural field in your community?" and asks you to provide names of individuals involved in the arts and cultural community in your town whom BBER may ask, in turn, to complete a survey for this study.

There are no risks associated with your participation in this study. All information you provide will be kept confidential. With your permission, BBER may use direct quotes from your survey in the final report or in presentations, but without including any identifying information.

The findings from this project will provide information on the human and institutional artistic, creative, and cultural assets in your community.

Do you have any questions for me about this research project, the survey, or your participation in the survey before I ask you for your consent to participate? [Allow time for questions and answers.]

Should any questions about this research project arise, you can call Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell at (505) 277-5993. If you have questions regarding your legal rights as a research subject, you may call the UNM Human Research Protections Office at (505) 277-0067.

Do you consent to participate in this survey? ____ Yes ____ No [Check the appropriate response.]

Researcher's Name

IRB#: 08-550
Version: 11/11/08

| | | | |
|--|----------|---------|----------|
| OFFICIAL USE ONLY | | | |
| APPROVED | 01/19/09 | EXPIRES | 01/18/10 |
| The University of New Mexico Main Campus IRB | | | |



Bureau of Business
& Economic Research

LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

Informed Consent

Before beginning the survey, the community volunteer ("Researcher") must read the Verbal Informed Consent for Surveys script (attached at the front) to the interviewee and check the appropriate response at the bottom of the script page. (If the interviewee does not give consent, do not proceed with the survey.) Then sign your name in the "Researcher's Name" area on the bottom of the script pages and leave one copy with the interviewee.

Inform the interviewee that the survey should take about 15-20 minutes.

Background:

1. Your name: _____
2. How long have you lived in/around Las Vegas? _____
If not for entire life, where did you live before? _____
3. Describe your involvement in arts, cultural, and creative activities. Please be specific about the type of creative work that you are engaged in (e.g., landscape painting, historical fiction).
4. Choosing from the following list, in which **one** role do you exert the greatest influence on the arts and cultural community in Las Vegas (*circle*). *Check other roles as appropriate.*

☐ artist ☐ preservationist ☐ teacher/mentor ☐ supporter (\$) ☐ student

☐ enthusiast ☐ volunteer ☐ organizer ☐ promoter ☐ business
5. Please identify arts & cultural or community organizations with which you are currently involved.

INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL ASSETS

6. Please name in rank order up to five people or institutions with whom your interactions are most important in your arts and cultural activities. These may include peers, mentors, students, artists, fans, collaborators, organizers, financial supporters, galleries, and so on.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. NAME _____ INSTITUTION _____ | |
| RELATIONSHIP _____ | FREQUENCY OF CONTACT 1 2 3 4 5 |
| TOWN OF RESIDENCE _____ | |
| CONTACT INFORMATION _____ | |
| 2. NAME _____ INSTITUTION _____ | |
| RELATIONSHIP _____ | FREQUENCY OF CONTACT 1 2 3 4 5 |
| TOWN OF RESIDENCE _____ | |
| CONTACT INFORMATION _____ | |
| 3. NAME _____ INSTITUTION _____ | |
| RELATIONSHIP _____ | FREQUENCY OF CONTACT 1 2 3 4 5 |
| TOWN OF RESIDENCE _____ | |
| CONTACT INFORMATION _____ | |
| 4. NAME _____ INSTITUTION _____ | |
| RELATIONSHIP _____ | FREQUENCY OF CONTACT 1 2 3 4 5 |
| TOWN OF RESIDENCE _____ | |
| CONTACT INFORMATION _____ | |
| 5. NAME _____ INSTITUTION _____ | |
| RELATIONSHIP _____ | FREQUENCY OF CONTACT 1 2 3 4 5 |
| TOWN OF RESIDENCE _____ | |
| CONTACT INFORMATION _____ | |

INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF LAS VEGAS ARTS AND CULTURAL ASSETS

Contact

1...no contact in years 2...about once a year 3...about once a month 4...about once a week
5...daily

7. Please name **in rank order** three ADVANTAGES and three DISADVANTAGES of working in the arts & cultural field in Las Vegas.

ADVANTAGES

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

DISADVANTAGES

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Demographics:

8. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

9. Age: ☐ Under 20 y/o ☐ 20-39 y/o ☐ 40-59 y/o ☐ Over 60 y/o

10. With which race and ethnicity do you identify yourself? (Check all that apply)

☐ Hispanic ☐ Anglo ☐ Native American

☐ African American ☐ Other _____

NOTES:

*Please leave the participant with the "Survey of the Arts & Cultural Community in Las Vegas" participant handout sheet and the **un-signed** copy of the informed consent form.*

*Please return the survey and the **signed** copy of the informed consent in the postage-paid business reply envelope.*

Please tell the participant about the online bulletin board at <http://gilacommunity.net> (scroll down to "Las Vegas Arts and Cultural District" section) or give them our address to mail comments:

UNM-BBER, Attn Molly Bleecker
MSC 06-3510; Albuquerque NM 87131



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