

SUSANA MARTINEZ
GOVERNOR

JON BARELA
CABINET SECRETARY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 22, 2015

Contact: Angela Heisel
(505) 629-5148
Angela.Heisel@state.nm.us

Governor Susana Martinez and Economic Development Secretary Jon Barela Announce Silver City and Gallup Each Receiving \$100,000 as Part of Historic Theater Initiative

Santa Fe, NM - Today, Governor Susana Martinez and Economic Development Secretary Jon Barela announced that the New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) is awarding the Silco Theater in Silver City, and the El Morro Theater in Gallup \$100,000 each as part of the Historic Theater Initiative. The Economic Development's Historic Theater Initiative aims to increase rural downtown traffic and provide entertainment options by restoring historic theaters to include updated movie projection equipment, while preserving their unique architectural details.

"The Historic Theater Initiative has been an innovative tool to save our historic theaters and revitalize economic development in the heart of New Mexico's rural communities," said Governor Martinez. "I am excited that Silver City and Gallup will soon experience economic benefits from the restoration of their theaters and upgrading them for modern use."

"Since we started this initiative in 2013, several communities have participated in this program, which is already great yielding results," said Secretary Barela. "Families are now able to stay closer to home to see a first-run movie, and rural downtown businesses are benefiting from the spillover effect of theater patrons."

The Silco Theater was built in 1923, and this is the second award for the theater for gap financing as part of the New Mexico Historic Theaters Initiative. Rehabilitation work on the theater includes new seating, digital projection and sound, restoration of the original entry and box office, electrical and plumbing upgrades, a new concession stand, and new marquee.

Silver City MainStreet has been working on the project since 2006 and was able to leverage recent funding from EDD to solicit an additional \$103,000 private sector donation from the Silver City Lions Club for the completion of theater restoration project. The Silco Theater is nearing the final phase of construction with work on the theater scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2015. The reopening of the Silco Theater will also coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Silver City MainStreet Project.

The historic El Morro Theater at 207 W. Coal Avenue in Gallup is one of New Mexico's outstanding movie "palaces," built in 1928 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The City of Gallup acquired the El Morro property in 2004. Subsequent city administrations have continually and gradually improved the theater with the ultimate goal of creating a unique, cultural multipurpose performing arts center for film, theater, dance, and music. In 2012, the City of Gallup acquired an adjacent property on Second Street and began construction of a new events center with rear entrance loading, backstage access,

dressing rooms, and public restrooms for the historic El Morro Theater, thus greatly expanding the size and capacity of the El Morro complex.

The historic El Morro Theater was designed as a 650-seat movie auditorium with an orchestra pit and modest dressing room facilities beneath the stage. Modern comfort standards have changed, and the dressing rooms are inadequate. The new Second Street Events Center provides generous dressing rooms for performers. The seating in the historic theater itself has been reduced to 460 seats provided on ground level and a balcony. The City of Gallup will have spent \$1.6 million on the events complex by the time it is completed.

A new digital projection and sound system was installed in the El Morro in March 2015 at a cost of \$87,356. The City used its own labor and outside contractors to build a new projection and control booth at a cost of over \$15,000 to accommodate the new projection and cinema sound system. The \$100,000 grant from EDD will go toward new flame-retardant stage drapery and screen masking and enhanced stage lighting.

In addition to financial assistance, the New Mexico MainStreet program will provide technical assistance that includes assessment of historic theaters, development of architectural plans, cost estimates for rehabilitation projects, advice on operations and business plans, programming, and industry contacts. The Historic Theater Initiative began in 2013 under the leadership of Economic Development Secretary Barela to help spur rural economic growth and improve quality of life. Since then, EDD has made grants to six publically owned, classic theaters throughout New Mexico. These include the Luna Theater in Clayton, the Silco Theater in Silver City, the Lea Theater in Lovington, the Shuler Theater in Raton, the El Morro Theater in Gallup, and the Lyceum Theater in Clovis.

###