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Creative Industries announces first round awardees of ACD Pilot Grant program

SANTA FE — Ten projects across New Mexico have been awarded Arts & Cultural District (ACD) Pilot Grants, powering economic growth and celebrating the cultural identities of local creative districts.

The pilot grants of up to \$100,000 each will help ACDs implement creative programming, support local economies, and highlight the value of sustained investment. Many of these projects use “creative placemaking,” an approach that integrates art and culture into community spaces to boost connection, vitality, and economic opportunity.

Developed by the New Mexico Economic Development Department’s Creative Industries Division (CID) in partnership with New Mexico Arts and New Mexico MainStreet, the one-time initiative will demonstrate the impact of directly funding state-authorized ACDs. Desired outcomes include increased foot traffic, creative infrastructure improvements, adaptive reuse of facilities like theaters, and business growth in the districts.

“When we invest in New Mexico’s creative people and places, we’re investing in our future,” said **Cabinet Secretary Rob Black of the New Mexico Economic Development Department**. “These projects show how art, culture, and community can come together to strengthen neighborhoods, grow local economies, and tell the story of who we are.”

“The ACD Pilot demonstrates what happens when we resource creative communities with intention and trust,” added **CID Director Shani Harvie**. “We are confident this initiative will be a proof of concept that highlights the transformative potential of local creative economies and builds the case for sustainable, long-term investment.”

Round Awardees of the ACD Pilot Grant Program:

- 1. Downtown Albuquerque Arts & Cultural District – \$100,000**
Downtown Albuquerque will expand its role as a cultural tourism anchor by supporting visual arts, marketing, and live entertainment. The project will feature monthly art activations, public performances, walking tours, and storytelling campaigns that showcase the city’s creative energy.
- 2. Artesia Arts & Cultural District – \$100,000**
Artesia MainStreet will revitalize downtown through creative placemaking, business support, and public art. The project includes storefront enhancements for local creative businesses and an expanded *Red Dirt Black Gold* music festival to strengthen community connections and boost tourism.
- 3. Carlsbad Arts & Cultural District – \$75,000**
Carlsbad will launch the *Neon Alley Reactivation Project* to transform an underused alley into a vibrant cultural destination. Featuring restored neon signs, murals and new installations, the project blends historic preservation with contemporary art to fuel local pride and economic growth.
- 4. Downtown Las Cruces Partnership Arts & Cultural District – \$100,000**
Las Cruces will transform one of North America’s most historic trade routes into a walkable cultural experience. Plans include creative signage, cultural mapping, murals, and events that celebrate local history.
- 5. Los Alamos Arts & Cultural District – \$100,000**
Los Alamos MainStreet and Creative District will launch an artist-in-residence program connecting downtown spaces and spotlighting creative businesses. The initiative will strengthen the local creative economy through collaborative placemaking and community-driven art.
- 6. Mora Arts & Cultural District – \$100,000**
Mora will transform the historic St. Vrain Mill and Chief Theater into an *Arts & Cultural Compound*. The project will create accessible venues for performances and exhibits, expand economic opportunities for artists, and establish a central gathering place for the community.
- 7. Raton Arts & Cultural District – \$100,000**

Raton MainStreet will redevelop the site of the historic Marchiondo (Golden Rule) Building into a multi-use public space with a permanent stage, seating, vendor areas, and murals. The project will create a lasting hub for creative entrepreneurship and community life.

8. **Silver City Arts & Cultural District – \$100,000**

Silver City will expand the historic Silco Theater to include a flexible black box-style performance space. The project will strengthen the performing arts scene, increase downtown economic activity, and position the Silco as a regional cultural hub.

9. **Gallup Arts & Cultural District – funding TBA**

Gallup will launch a pilot program to support youth career pathways in the performing and visual arts. The program will offer opportunities to perform, collaborate, compose, and sell creative works in partnership with the Levitt AMP Gallup Music Series. The goal is to encourage youth to explore various musical genres and art media, increasing their exposure, knowledge, and skills while building foundations for viable careers in the music and visual arts industries.

10. **Las Vegas Arts & Cultural District - \$100,000**

The Las Vegas Arts & Cultural District will activate the Historic Railroad District through art and culture to strengthen the local creative ecosystem. The project will help artists become entrepreneurs, develop local talent, and position the district as a tourist destination. Plans include façade improvements, creative placemaking, creative economy marketing, and public education campaigns.

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