Economic Transformation Through Design, Arts and Culture

Elmo Baca, Owner, Indigo Theater
Las Vegas New Mexico
THE MAIN STREET APPROACH
FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

• The 4 Points - Organization, Design, Promotion and Economic Restructuring

• Organization - A strong working board, committees, stakeholders

• Design - Look for “design” people: artists, architects, graphic designers, etc.

• Promotion - Events planners, impresarios, showmanship

• Economic Restructuring - business types, industry, government, finance

• Meetings vs. Zoom?
THE BIG PICTURE OF LOCAL ECONOMIES

- **Base Economy** - “Base Jobs” Agriculture, Manufacturing, Mining, Transportation, Government, Education, Health Care, Construction, etc.

- **Service Economy** - Hotels and Restaurants, Retail, Apparel, Repair and Maintenance, Tourism

- **Creative Economy** - Arts, Design, Music, Journalism, Cuisine, Internet, Computers and Software, Healing and Wellness
The Creative Economy was facilitated by emergence of the World Wide Web into the public domain in 1993-94.

Smartphones first emerged in the 1990’s but were not ubiquitous in business and popular usage until Blackberry phones “aka Crackberry” were the rage in 2006.
KNOWLEDGE WORKERS
A NEW ENTREPRENEUR

- TECHNOLOGY FREED SOME WORKERS AND ENTREPRENEURS FROM OFFICES AND FROM “BRICKS AND MORTAR” LOCATIONS

- KNOWLEDGE WORKERS ARE HIGHER INCOME EARNERS AND ATTRACTED TO PLACES WITH CULTURAL AMENITIES AND ACCESS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION
Small Business and Entrepreneurs
MAIN STREETS IN TRANSITION

EVER CHANGING DOWNTOWNS

- 1960s-1980s - Rapid growth of suburbs and shopping centers
- 1990s - Expansion and dominance of Wal-Mart and “Big Box” retailers
- 2000s - Present - Arts and Cultural districts and Placemaking
- 2000s - Present - Online retail, e.g. Ebay and Amazon
- 2010 - Present - Global warming/climate change beginning to affect migration patterns
- 2019 - Present - COVID Pandemic
NEW MEXICO ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICTS

- IN 2006 NM EDD PASSES THE NEW MEXICO ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICTS ACT CREATING ARTS AND CULTURAL DISTRICTS

- THE STATE STATUTE DEFINES “CULTURAL FACILITIES” ELIGIBLE FOR LEDA FUNDING SUPPORT INCLUDING THEATERS, LIBRARIES, ART GALLERIES AND STUDIOS, SCHOOLS, AND LIVE WORK HOUSING
MAIN STREET DE LAS VEGAS

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE SINCE 2019

- 34 new businesses, 4 closings
- 69 building renovations
- Value of building renovations = $6,178,636
- Number of public infrastructure projects = 15
- Value of Infrastructure projects = $2,018,400
- Number of commercial buildings sold = 24
- Value of commercial buildings sold = $5,485,00

SOURCE: MAIN STREET DE LAS VEGAS
DESIGN IS A CATALYST FOR REVITALIZATION

Gross Kelly Mercantile Building, Las Vegas Railroad District
Rise of the Internet, smart phones, and creative companies like Apple have “spoiled” the consumer and entrepreneurs.

High quality design is critical if your town will stay competitive and vibrant.

Building design, storefronts, interiors, signage, landscapes, public art, products work together to produce a certain “feel” or curb appeal.
TOWARDS A PRESERVATION ETHIC

BUILDINGS TELL YOUR STORY

- Certain buildings must be saved at all costs - “landmarks”

- Each town has a palette that makes it unique - materials, colors, styles, scale

- Certain economic conditions and incentives are favorable for historic preservation - pandemics, inflation and housing crisis
HISTORIC PRESERVATION IS HOT!

EVERYONE CAN BE A HERO AND MAKE MONEY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND DESIGN

A COMPLEMENTARY RELATIONSHIP

Stella’s, Rear Facade

Fat Crow Press, Las Vegas

The Skillet, LV

Rehab Underway, Bridge Street
E. ROMERO FIRE STATION
FIRST FIRE STATION IN NEW MEXICO

- 9 year project, 6 funding phases totaling $427,000
- Began with a $2000 MainStreet facade squad in 2009
- MainStreet Capital Outlay award of $75,000 in 2013
- MainStreet de LV and the City win a $150,000 Partners in Progress award in national contest
- Now a fire department museum and city offices
CASTAÑEDA HOTEL

A GREAT HARVEY HOUSE RESTORED

- $5 million project utilized federal and state historic tax credits and New Market Tax Credits
THE SKILLET
TACOS MEET MEOW WOLF

• Young local entrepreneurs with fine arts degrees convert historic trolley barn into new bar/restaurant

• New “cultural facility,” local hangout and tourist destination
A CASE STUDY
LAS VEGAS, NM

INDIGO THEATER & STELLA’S

- Turning two historic landmark buildings into new cultural facilities
- Importance of historic preservation and design
- How business promotions can enliven a business district

BACA BUILDING AND ESTELLA’S CAFE AS THEY APPEARED IN 2014
• Opened December 2015
• New digital cinema with 51 seats
• Licensed as a first run commercial cinema
• New auditorium, concession stand, lighting, heating and cooling
• Closed during COVID pandemic for 56 weeks
STELLA’S CAFE
148 BRIDGE STREET
LAS VEGAS, NM

HISTORIC PRESERVATION & ADAPTIVE REUSE

• 3 year rehabilitation project by Frank and Jan Buerskens from Buffalo, NY

• Front facade reconstructed

• Structural steel installed throughout building

• New electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems

• 2 apartments upstairs, storefront below
CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

SIGNATURE EVENTS & MERCHANT PROMOTIONS

- Signature events are district wide
- Make the most of venues and grow new ones
- Seek out and support cultural entrepreneurs
- Maximize cultural facilities
- Encourage merchants to promote
- Arts Crawls, First Fridays, Music al fresco

Plaza Park

Food Truck Court

Buffalo Bar BBQ, Saloon, Dance Hall

New Buffalo Hall
STELLA’S CAFE

DESIGN, MARKETING, & PROMOTION

- Coffee shop menu - pastries, sandwiches, soups, breakfast
- “Bohemian Chic” design
- Local artists on display
- Music “jam” sessions on Sunday afternoons
- Poetry slams and LV Literary Society
RECENT THEATER PROMOTIONS

BILLY THE KID SHOOTOUT FESTIVAL, SEPT. 29-OCTOBER 1, 2022
INDIGO PROMOTIONS

PSYCHO - A GO GO

HALLOWEEN 2022
Economic chaos and restructuring likely for a few years - the post-pandemic recovery

The Creative Economy likely to keep expanding with more workers moving from the Service sector

Leveraging cultural centers and building social capital is essential to attracting entrepreneurs.