



Looking Back: the Past Five Years



**FY2019-2023
IMPACT REPORT**



Raton is *small town America* at its finest. It is a comfortable place to live where residents and visitors can escape the *hustle and bustle* of more hectic lifestyles, to be greeted by heartfelt smiles and friendly hellos while strolling downtown, a place where neighbors truly care for each other and offer hospitality to visitors without hesitation. Raton has a deep sense of shared values and community pride, a keen appreciation of its historical and cultural heritage, and also provides the best of modern conveniences. Life in Raton makes you want to be part of this thriving community where businesses prosper and economic opportunities abound.



MESSAGE FROM THE RATON MAINSTREET EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Brenda Ferri
Executive Director, Raton MainStreet

Hello Friends!

It is my pleasure to present *Looking Back: the Past Five Years FY2019-2023* Raton MainStreet Impact Report.

This report is designed to inform our partners, the community, elected officials and other interested individuals of our organizations activities, progress, challenges and accomplishments over the last 5 years. We are proud of what we have accomplished for our community. Raton MainStreet has worked diligently to create a great place for business and fun in the downtown area with projects like the Great Blocks on MainStreet, the Shuler Theater Digital Upgrade, Branding the City, Wayfinding and the Gate City Music Festival just to name a few. During the pandemic, we worked diligently with business owners to help them weather the pandemic-related impacts. Through the hard work and collaboration of so many business and community leaders, not a single business closed down permanently. We also helped businesses in our County and surrounding communities. We look forward to positive economic and community development that will continue as we move forward.

Thank you for taking the time to review this report. It is a privilege to serve this community and I look forward to what the future holds for Raton!

Brenda Ferri



We are committed members of the community dedicated to improving the quality of life in Raton by revitalizing our downtown area. We work to foster business prosperity and offer new economic opportunities. We envision a community where all generations can have a sense of pride in Raton and all cultures feel respect for their heritage.

THE MAIN STREET APPROACH™



TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES & STANDARDS



The National Main Street Center (NMSC) was established as a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1980 as a way to address the myriad issues facing older and historic downtowns, helping to restore economic vitality, while celebrating their historic character, and bringing communities together. In 2013, NMSC relaunched as an independent subsidiary of National Trust, and is now known as Main Street America.

Today, Main Street America is a network of more than 1,200 neighborhoods and communities, rural and urban, who share both a commitment to place and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development using The Main Street Approach™.

In New Mexico, the Main Street America partners with State Coordinating Program, New Mexico MainStreet (NM Economic Development Department) to support local programs in 30+ communities around the state.

Economic Transformation Strategies are the center of the Main Street Approach™ that articulate a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy. Raton MainStreet's Transformation Strategies are organized around the Four Points, informed by a solid understanding of local and regional market data, and sustained and inclusive community engagement.

An effective Transformation Strategy serves a particular customer segment, responds to an underserved market demand, or creates a differentiated destination. Some “ready-to-use” strategies — called Catalyst Strategies — fall into two broad categories: those that are focused on a specific customer segment and those that are focused on an industry, product, or service segment.



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Economic Vitality focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

Design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

Promotion positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

Organization involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

Main Street America's Six Standards:

The Six Standards are comprised 35 performance indicators and 163 elements that outline what it means to be a highly successful Main Street program. The Six Standard include:

- I. Broad-Based Community Commitment To Revitalization
- II. Inclusive Leadership And Organizational Capacity
- III. Diversified Funding And Sustainable Program Operations
- IV. Strategy-Driven Programming
- V. Preservation-Based Economic Development
- VI. Demonstrated Impact And Results



Raton MainStreet has met or exceeded all Six Standards of the Main Street America Evaluation Framework and has been designated by New Mexico MainStreet as an Accredited program for the 2024 calendar year following a comprehensive review in Fall 2023.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES



Strategy 1

Capitalize on Great Blocks infrastructure investments in the downtown district.

- Assist developers and investors to develop commercial and residential projects set forth in the Great Blocks project area of the Downtown Master Plan by implementing the *Open for Business* initiative which invites our community members and visitors inside. Implement organizational tasks for the *Open For Business* goals which will identify funds, grants and incentives available to business owners and engage the community residents, stakeholder and partner organizations in the *Open for Business* initiative.
- Activate Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) tools for business recruitment
- Continue holding events that bring residents and visitors to the multi-modal/Great Blocks area
- Implement facade squad projects on properties throughout the district, in tandem with the

- Economic Vitality (EV) project goal of recruiting at least one new business annually:
- Find proper building location
 - Identify a building
 - Find a willing landlord
 - Talk with building owners to initiate potential facade improvements
 - Identify building needs
 - Access NMMS support for property development/rehab projects
- Implement Organization tasks for the *Open for Business* goals:
- Identify funds, grants, and incentives available to business owners
 - Engage the community residents, stakeholder, and partner organizations in the *Open for Business* initiative

Strategy 2

Strengthen the Small Business Sector

- Activate our MRA tools and use them to recruit and develop businesses
- Continue to hold the MainStreet events:
 - Gate City Music Festival
 - Santa Fe Trail Balloon Rally
 - 4th of July Parade
 - 4th of July *Fun on First Street*
 - Festival of Lights
 - Carnival (fundraiser)
 - Shop Local Campaign
- Install wayfinding features to assist potential customers to locate all that downtown Raton has to offer
- Strengthen relationships between the board and business and property owners
- Use website and social media to list and promote the district's assets

Capacity Building Strategy

Inclusive leadership and organizational capacity and strategy-driven programming

- Annual Board Retreat/Training
- Annual Volunteer Recruitment Event
- Annual Fundraising Initiatives
- NMMS Quarterly Reporting
- Economic Development Partnership with The City of Raton, GrowRaton and The Center for Community Innovation

THE PAST FIVE YEARS
· OUR 2019-2023 IMPACT ·



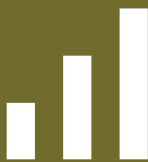
\$1,409,600 in Private Reinvestment

25,549
Volunteer Hours



65
Businesses Supported

\$1,244,000
in Public Reinvestment



18 New Businesses | 34 Building Rehabs



\$1,779,000 in NMMS Capital Outlay Funding

\$1,172,140 in NMMS Technical Assistance Services

84

Net Jobs Added



51
Events Conducted
17,400
Event Attendees



\$2,030,498
in Grants Received



5
Design/Placemaking
Projects Completed



2019-2023 Project Highlights



Great Blocks Project

Raton was the pilot project for the Great Blocks on MainStreet program starting in 2015. This catalytic project is located in Raton's historic downtown district on First Street between Park & Rio Grande Avenues. Raton MainStreet worked closely with the City of Raton as well as property and business owners in the district to complete the project.

This project was completed in the Summer of 2021 with numerous accomplishments that stimulated economic revitalization of the area:

- façade improvements
- wayfinding signage
- lighting improvements
- street & pedestrian enhancements such as new street surfaces, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, crosswalks, trees, benches, parking enhancements, and safety features
- public art installations

In addition, the City of Raton and Raton's City Commission funded several related projects in the same

vicinity which complemented the Great Blocks project, making a bigger impact!

These projects include:

- The City of Raton Multi-Modal Transportation project
- South First Street's waterline infrastructure replacement
- South First Street's area street resurfacing

The end result is a "beautiful and historically significant area to the grandeur and vibrancy that it once had," said Former Raton City Manager Scott Berry. First Street now provides a grand gateway to the downtown district. Across from the Raton Amtrak station, the Old Pass Gallery and the new multi-modal transportation center, this dramatic entry invites visitors to explore the many attractions of the MainStreet and Arts and Culture district. Wide, pleasant sidewalks with shade trees, attractive benches, landscaping, and public art combine with wayfinding signs to encourage strolling, shopping, socializing and gathering at community events.



Signature Events

Raton MainStreet organizes and hosts 3 signature events for the City of Raton. The International Santa Fe Trail Balloon Rally/4th of July Fun on First Street, The Gate City Music Festival and the Annual Festival of Lights.

Recent data revealed that on the 4th of July 2023, more than 7,000 visited downtown Raton during the festivities. The Gate City Music Festival has

seen headliners like Deanna Carter, Restless Heart, Suzy Boggus, Mark Wills and The Bellamy Brothers.

These multi-day events attract visitors from surrounding states as well as other countries. These events drew more than 17,000 people to the community and the downtown business district.



We held 22 shows and helped 33 businesses. The Raton Cash Mob Facebook page has 1,722 followers and shows averaged around 99 viewers/shoppers per show. The team effort brought nearly \$38,000 into Raton's small businesses during the state-mandated closures and restrictions.

Everyone involved with the Raton Cash Mob was a volunteer. The idea caught on around the state. The Raton team trained a team in Las Vegas and also inspired Clovis and Tucumcari to host similar events.

City Branding & Wayfinding

Raton MainStreet partnered with the City of Raton. We created a committee of stakeholders and worked with a New Mexico-based visual design/branding agency to create a new brand and identity for the City of Raton. The final product is amazing and is now used on everything in the City of Raton.

Once the visual brand was created, Raton MainStreet applied for the T-Mobile Hometown Grant to purchase and install monument and wayfinding signage to make our town more inviting to visitors, increase walkability, as well as driving directions to access numerous points of interest and to increase connectivity between the various parts of our town.

Business Sustainability & Recovery Program/Raton Cash Mob

When COVID-19 hit, Raton MainStreet received a grant from the New Mexico Resiliency Alliance to create a Business Sustainability and Recovery Fund. The City of Raton and InBank also donated to the fund so that we could help more businesses. We were able to award 22 grants for a total of \$16,500 to local businesses to help them survive during the state-mandated closures and restrictions.

Raton MainStreet also came up with a solution of their own to help struggling small businesses by doing virtual Cash Mobs. From April 9, 2020 through July 2, 2020, our team held Facebook Live events every Tuesday and Thursday to help struggling businesses in Raton and Colfax County.



MRA Workshop through Award of RFP

Raton MainStreet — in partnership with New Mexico MainStreet Revitalization Specialists — created and held a pilot workshop for Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) Public/Private Partnerships. As a result of the workshop, the City of Raton released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Coors Building. The RFP resulted in 3 submissions.

The RFP was awarded to Moss Adventures and within 6 months of awarding the RFP, the Raton Adventure Center has opened up in the Coors Building.



Murals

Raton MainStreet has sponsored three murals in Raton: two of them in our District and one at the Raton Visitors Center. We held a fundraising campaign to purchase the paint and then partnered with local artists and volunteers to get the murals completed.



The MainStreet Bucks Program

In 2021, Raton MainStreet started the *MainStreet Bucks* Program. The paper money can be spent at participating local businesses and it has really helped with our *Shop Local* initiative. They can be purchased from MainStreet and they are also given out as Prize Money for our Festival of Light Parade.



I've been involved with our **Raton Mainstreet Program** for the past 15 years, I've seen many ups and downs, however since 2013 when our Executive Director was hired I've seen this organization become stronger. She has made sure to do what is necessary on her part, to become an accredited organization. I love working with Brenda, I believe because of her leadership, dedication, commitment, and love for her home town & Raton MainStreet we have been able to recruit some pretty awesome board members!

We have Board of Directors who are dedicated to our Vision & Mission, who are willing to be a working Board Member also in support of our Executive Director, Brenda. I love our relationship knowing this as our common goal for the success of our Organization which in turn helps to keep us in good standing. I appreciate the awesome support and good working relationship we have had over the years with our City Manager and Elected Officials! It is my hope that this will continue, as the saying goes, ***Together Strong.***

Christine Valentini

President, Raton MainStreet · Arts & Culture District

ARTS & CULTURAL DISTRICTS



The Arts & Cultural Districts Program promotes the exceptional art and history of New Mexico while assisting communities in developing their cultural and artistic resources to create dynamic and economically vibrant districts.

Arts & Cultural enterprises represent the unique fusion of local cultural expressions with economic and business development. An arts and cultural economic enterprise generates economic benefit from:

- Job creation
- Sales and exports of arts and cultural products
- Enhanced taxes
- Tourism activity
- Community educational activities

The Arts & Cultural District Program is a joint effort of New Mexico MainStreet (NM Economic Development Department), New Mexico Arts and the Historic Preservation Division (NM Department of Cultural Affairs). The Arts & Cultural District is a designation attached to local MainStreet programs that have identified and incorporated arts, culture, and the creative economy as primary economic development strategies for their districts.



An Arts & Cultural District designation focuses the work of a local MainStreet program around a communities' arts and cultural economic assets to grow quality of life and tourism opportunities. The work of an Arts & Cultural District is guided by a Cultural Economic Development Plan established through a community planning process and adopted by the local government.

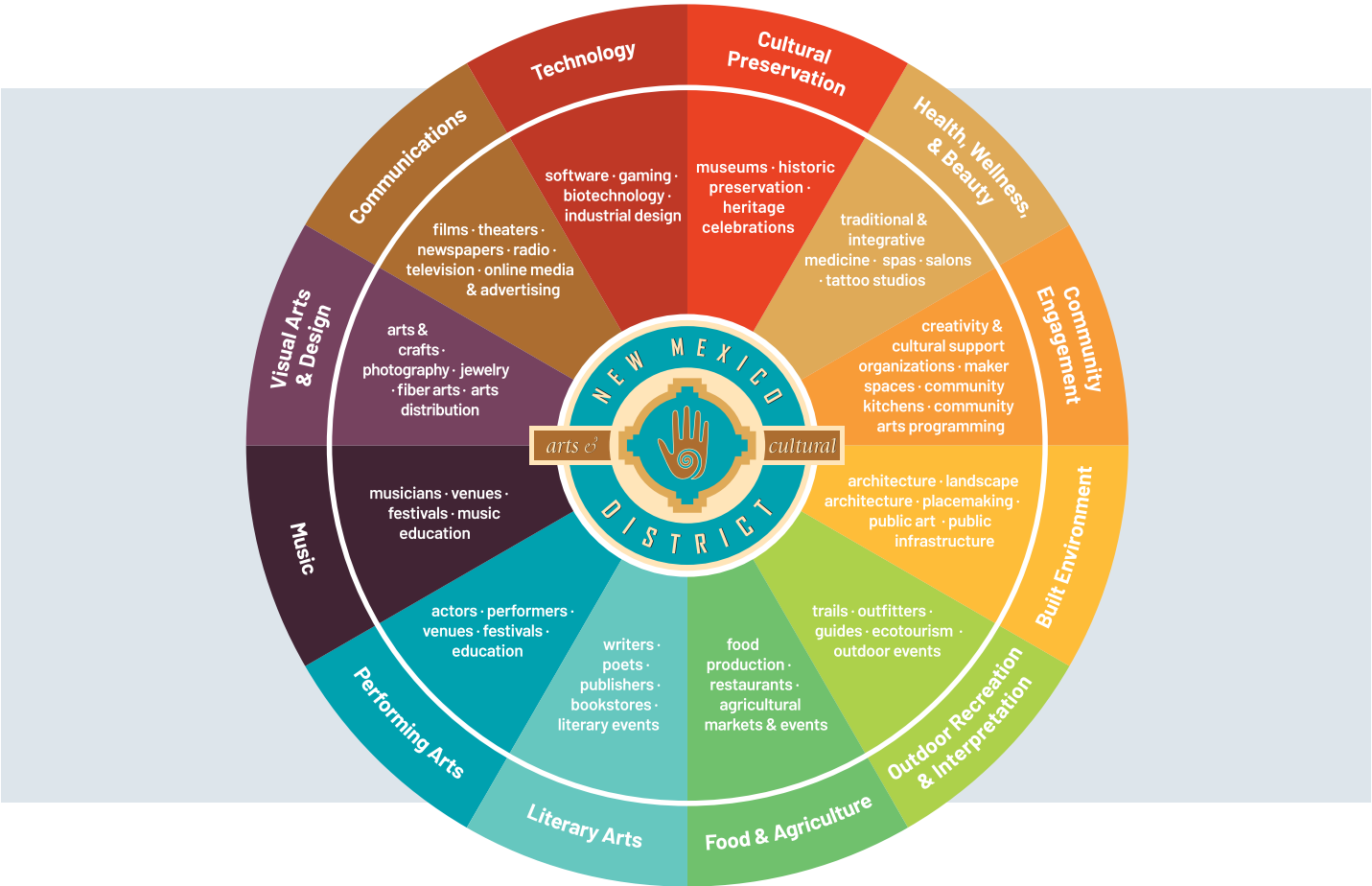
New Mexico MainStreet supports State-Authorized Arts & Cultural Districts in developing and implementing cultural economic goals based on existing arts, heritage and cultural assets, including strategies to support:

- Arts and cultural entrepreneurs
- Spaces for arts & cultural entrepreneurs to live and work in
- Cultural enterprises and cultural facilities
- Cultural institutions
- Creative placemaking and related organizations

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY



Building on the Creative Economy is a unique and highly specialized approach to economic revitalization in a MainStreet/Arts & Cultural district. The Creative Economy encompasses entrepreneurs, enterprises, and industries that engage at the intersection of commerce, creativity, innovation and culture to enhance local and statewide economies.



The Creative Economy includes those who:

- Produce creative products
- Turn creations into commercial products
- Distribute or market creative projects
- Support creative endeavors and the spaces they live and work in

Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurs cannot exist in a vacuum — they require a rich creative and cultural environment, or ecosystem, in order to thrive. New Mexico MainStreet has identified twelve Creative Economy sectors, each of which includes a comprehensive listing of different business types and cultural/creative industries.



Raton MainStreet has met all annual performance requirements to maintain its designation as a State-Authorized Arts & Cultural District

LOOKING AHEAD: FUTURE STRATEGIES



Our goal is to continue to help the Raton downtown district thrive to support prosperity for residents, build success for local-owned and locally-engaged small businesses, and create a vibrant place for all to enjoy. With that goal in mind, we’ve updated our Economic Transformation Strategies to guide future work.

Strategy 1

Grow Downtown’s Creative Economy

Downtown Raton has a wealth of arts, cultural and creative businesses, as well as activities that support the Creative Economy. Supporting and building upon these assets, we expect to strengthen Raton’s Creative Economy and establish the downtown district as a centerpiece of creative endeavors.

Strategy 2

Attract Local Residents to the Downtown District

It’s critical that downtown Raton attract a diverse audience, prioritizing local commerce for area residents. Raton MainStreet shall work to attract multi-generational and diverse audiences to the downtown district – children/youth, families and adults. Through this strategy and related projects, we will focus on local residents as a key to downtown economic and cultural success.

Strategy 3

Grow Capacity and Resources to Meet our Mission

Enhance our capacity to advance revitalization and economic development efforts by strengthening our Board of Directors, securing funding for operations, growing staff and volunteer capacity, enhancing communications with residents/stakeholders, and strengthening partnerships.

LOOKING AHEAD: FUTURE PROJECTS



As we sustain our history of successes with downtown events, improvements to properties, and small business supports, we also want to provide a glimpse of some big plans for the coming year:

Continue Physical Improvements

- Continue to support improvements at the InBank building by connecting technical assistance and design experts to finalize a campus master plan that addresses overall site, parking, and landscaping features
- In partnership with the City of Raton, launch a second large scale property improvement project under the *Metropolitan Redevelopment Area* plan.
- Complete the historic railroad depot rehabilitation and restoration efforts.
- Apply for a grant from the Cultural Properties Restoration Fund to support improvements to historic properties.



Strengthen Economic Vitality

- Reduce the number of vacant buildings downtown by promoting properties of opportunity to prospective entrepreneurs and businesses.
- Explore incentives to help reduce the cost of leasing commercial properties in the downtown district.
- Sponsor workshops and trainings to support successful small businesses in the downtown MainStreet district.
- Grow our micro-grant program for small business development.

Maintain Vibrant Places

- Install a mural that will serve as a focal point for social (and social media) interactions by the public.
- Strengthen economic efforts that prioritize the needs of local residents.
- Continue to conduct events and holiday offerings that create opportunities for everyone to enjoy Raton’s historic downtown district.
- Plan and implement a downtown car rally that celebrates the history and culture of Raton’s unique community composition.

Want to get involved?

Contact the Raton MainStreet Executive Director at bferri@ratonmainstreet.org or visit ratonmainstreet.org for more information.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



BOARD & STAFF



FUNDERS & SPONSORS



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Roy & Leslie Fernandez

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PARTNERS



Raton MainStreet Board (Not Pictured: Robin Pais)

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President

Devin Barton
Vice President

Serena Lannon
Treasurer

Melissa Medina
Secretary
- Rebecca Sakelaris**

Linda Headley

Lynette Simpson

Vaughn Vialpando
- Robin Pais**

Ayden Hall

Jennifer Portillos

Staff

Brenda Ferri
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