



THE ALBUQUERQUE TRIBUNE

Head of Downtown development will leave N.M. to join think tank

By Erik Siemers

ESIEMERS@ABQTRIB.COM / 823-3674

Christopher Leinberger, chief executive of the group credited with helping Downtown revitalization, is leaving Albuquerque.

Leinberger plans to depart in July to become a visiting fellow with the Brookings Institution, a think tank in Washington, D.C., said Owen Lopez, executive director of the McCune Charitable Foundation.

The Santa Fe-based McCune Foundation is part of the public-private partnership that forms the Historic District Improvement Co., which Leinberger headed.

A land-use strategist, Leinberger also will join the University of



Leinberger

Michigan faculty, Lopez said.

Leinberger declined to discuss details of his departure, citing some "bureaucratic processes" that have yet to be completed.

But he did say his role in Downtown redevelopment won't end with his new position.

"I am on the board of HDIC. I maintain my ownership of HDIC. I'm deeply involved with HDIC no matter what," Leinberger said. "I am deeply committed to HDIC and Downtown Albuquerque, both by position and financial interest."

The HDIC is a for-profit, public-private partnership of the McCune Charitable Foundation, Arcadia Land Co. and the Downtown Action Team, chosen in the late 1990s by the City Council to be master developer of several Downtown properties.

Since 1998 it has been responsible for various redevelopment projects in Downtown.

Lopez said he will now play a larger role in the HDIC.

"I'm not going to make it a full-time job, nor did he, but I will play a supervising role as part of a team to oversee the continuing development," he said. "He's going to continue on the consulting role for the indefinite future."

EDITORIAL

Bouquets

Bouquet: Leinberger

Christopher Leinberger's name might not have the same pop in Albuquerque as, say, "Fantasy Island" star Ricardo Montalban's. But Leinberger has secured himself a significant place in the Duke City's history, which deserves acknowledgement as he prepares to leave town in July.

(Congrats to Montalban, by the way, for his honorary doctorate from the University of New Mexico, and our best wishes for his recovery from illness.)

In the past decade, Leinberger has been one of the strongest advocates for Downtown redevelopment, smart growth and New Urbanist planning principles. While Leinberger has lots of company, he stands out for making the clearest case yet for investing private money in Downtown — and for putting his money where his mouth is.

Leinberger, a real estate investor and land-use strategist, is a founder and head of the Historic District Improvement Co. That's the public-private partnership that has energized much recent growth in Downtown, including entertainment venues, restaurants, shops and housing. He has successfully sold the idea that Downtown is a lucrative market for a mixture of lively ventures that appeal to a rising "creative class" and others who want the option of living in a real urban environment.

His idea dovetails perfectly with efforts to make the city grow more efficiently, by filling in the inner city, rather than allowing it to wither and die.

Leinberger will become a visiting fellow with the prestigious Brookings Institution and a faculty member at the University of Michigan.

Of course, a lot more work remains Downtown. The good news is that Leinberger says he'll maintain his association with the Historic District Improvement Co. His continued contributions