



# The Changing Face of Downtown Albuquerque

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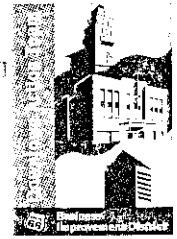
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# The Face of Downtown Albuquerque is Changing!



**F**or those of you who haven't seen what all the talk is about, now is the time for you to come see the changes with your own eyes.

We've made tremendous progress over the past couple of years, and there are a lot of people and companies involved who have made this initiative successful. The opening of the new Century Movie Theatres and Tucanos Brazilian Grill has provided strong anchors at First and Central. The renovation of Old Albuquerque High School into loft apartments has provided new opportunities for people to live in Downtown. Other developers are building state-of-the-art, modern homes on the edge of Downtown, while others are building loft-condos right next-door to the movie theater.

The Alvarado Transportation Center reminds us of our past with architecture from the much-missed Alvarado Hotel. Many of our local business owners who have been with Downtown for many years are staying open later and on the weekends. And, other local entrepreneurs have provided us with much-needed retail.

It's important to note that we've just begun! Two years from now, you won't recognize the Downtown today. So many have mentioned the changes thus far. This isn't the end, though, but only the beginning. I invite all readers of the *New Mexico Business*



**LUISA LINDSEY**

*Journal* to come Downtown and see what we've done. Downtown Albuquerque—the heart of the state of New Mexico—is definitely the place to live, work and play.

Come Discover Downtown! Thousands of families are realizing everyday that there's only one place where you can experience entertainment, shopping, dining and working all in the same place.

Sincerely,  
Luisa Lindsey, President  
Downtown Action Team

**T**he Downtown Action Team is proud to be the leader of the revitalization effort of Albuquerque's Downtown. We just recently celebrated our one-year anniversary of the Downtown Business Improvement District—the first and only one in the state of New Mexico.

A Business Improvement District (BID) provides for an assessment on each commercial property for downtown improvements and services, including Clean & Safe Teams, marketing/ public relations, business recruitment and retention, neighborhood relations, government relations and more.

The Downtown Action Team is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of Downtown



**JOANIE GRIFFIN**

Albuquerque as the best mid-sized Downtown in the USA. We are especially proud of our Ambassadors and Clean Team—the men and women in red who are on the streets daily to assist visitors, work with the police department on crime prevention and keep the streets, sidewalks and alleys clean.

We invite you to come Downtown this summer and see what we have to offer. We have teamed up with 93.3 KKOB-FM and Magic 99.5 FM to host Downtown Thursday Nights this summer on the 4th Street Mall at 4th Street and Central Avenue. Come sit in the shade of the buildings, sip on your favorite libation and listen to some

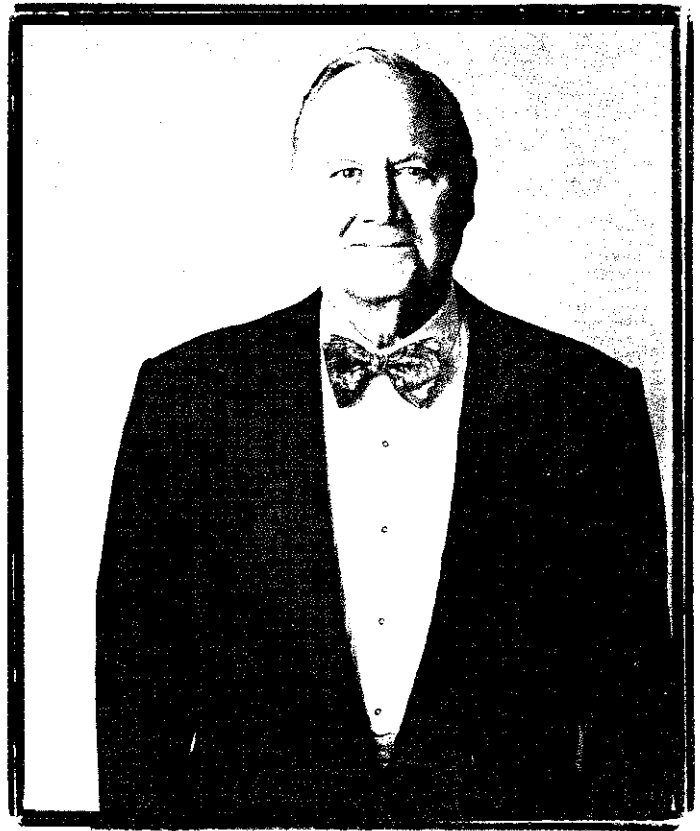
great live music. After you've cooled off, you'll have plenty of energy to shop for a pair of shoes or find some unique art. Have your family and friends meet you Downtown for dinner and a movie.

Or maybe you'd like to join us on Saturday mornings for the Downtown Growers' Market and Festival at Robinson Park at 8th and Central, where local growers and artisans sell their goods.

Downtown Albuquerque is quickly becoming the community-gathering place where we meet new people, connect with friends, have a good time and feel proud about the great place we all live.

We look forward to seeing you on the streets of Downtown.

Sincerely,  
Joanie Griffin, Chairman  
Downtown Action Team  
Board of Directors

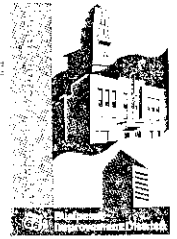


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# The Crown Jewel of New Mexico's Downtown Revitalization Efforts, Albuquerque Comes Alive Past Nine to Five



The much-talked-about revitalization of Albuquerque's downtown is here—see how it's working for New Mexico's largest city.

by Julia Knight

You hear the saying—"Oh they roll up the sidewalks after five around here," to describe many a sleepy, forgotten downtown area. Alive during working hours with harried financial or legal workers, a ghost town with dark desolate streets after dark.

The streets were dark and desolate which made people think it was a haven, but in fact the crime rate has always been lower in the DT area than some other parts of Downtown.

Not so in New Mexico's largest city. Albuquerque's downtown is seeing people filling its streets night and day as well-planned revitalization efforts take hold.

For many younger night owls, going out downtown to bars is nothing new. But today a mix of retail, commercial and residential has expanded downtown's offerings.

Restaurants and entertainment were the early embracers of downtown magic. Sauce, a hip pizza place fronts the swank cocktail place, Liquid Lounge and Raw—downtown's answer to high-style sushi—are nightlife spots attracting a varied, affluent crowd.

"This is the only true urban environment in New Mexico," said Mike Goodwin, president of the corporation that owns and operates the new nightclub, OPM (for open in the PM) and secretary and treasurer of Sauce and Raw. "It is the heartbeat of the city."

Perhaps downtown's biggest land was Century's 14-screen multiplex, located on Central Ave. The modern



▲ The Stuffed Croissant keeps Downtown lunch-goers well fed with fresh sandwiches and more



▲ Brewsters is one of many establishments Downtown that provides live entertainment.



## Albuquerque's downtown is seeing people filling its streets night and day as well-planned revitalization efforts take hold.

retailing contemporary jewelry, is another of the wave, says GERALYN Erickson, partner with her sister in the business, "who decided to take a chance and shoot for the stars" by locating downtown. "Lots of influential people put time and energy into downtown, and it shows," she said.

"We're committed to a healthy mix of local investors for the fabric of downtown," Luisa Lindsey, president of the Downtown Action Team (DAT) said. "We want to keep it Albuquerque—keep it local."

The plan DAT is employing focuses on entertainment first, to get people downtown and create a feeling of excitement, while encouraging residential, retail and then business activity in the 85-block area.

Plans are to draw Albuquerque residents downtown not just to shop or play, but also to live. The renovation of the Albuquerque High School into residential lofts, along with other new developments, is attracting people interested in the urban lifestyle.

Alexis Kerschner, a 20-something public relations account executive, has lived downtown for more than two years, most recently in the new lofts.

"The most significant change I've seen is that the people who go downtown are more diverse," Kerschner observes. "Before it was college students, a fringe crowd or lots of music lovers. Now I see middle-aged couples—people who might usually frequent restaurants in the Northeast Heights."

### ▲ Pearl's Dive (6th and Central)

*There are plenty of places to dine out with your family or spend happy hour with your friends. Pearl's Dive, on Central between 5th and 6th, has quickly become a Downtown favorite.*

theater brings in an earlier-evening crowd that before may have been leery of downtown and its reputation as dangerous.

Retail, too, is emerging cautiously as part of the trend. High-fashion footwear can be found at the year-old Ruby Shoesday on Gold Street, and owner (and downtown resident) Jackie Gonzales opened a clothing store, Jack Flash, in June. She acknowledged opening downtown was a risk, but "figured they'd been talking about it

for a long time and if somebody didn't take the first step, it was never going to happen."

Business has been doing very well, a grateful Gonzales says, and she's "happy with the progress and hopeful for things to come." Gonzales echoes many residents when she cites things like an upscale grocery and independent drug store as next on the list of desired downtown businesses, along with additional retail.

Stacie Shain Design Jewelry,

She attributes this in part to the "buzz" about downtown—a "basic curiosity." In the past, Kerschner notes, people may have been scared of downtown because of its reputation as an empty, and therefore dangerous place.

"Our primary goal is to change the negative perception of downtown," Lindsey emphasizes. Run by a board of directors made up of business people operating downtown, DAT uses an additional payment proffered by property owners to pay for ambassadors, for extra people to clean the streets and for publicity and marketing efforts.

The downtown ambassadors, Lindsey describes as "walking concierges" working with people on an individual basis to improve their idea of downtown a person at a time.

While downtown is busy raising the quality of life for Albuquerque residents, attracting visitors is a parallel goal.

"The vitality of downtown is critical to marketing convention and leisure travel," said Tania Armenta, director of communications for the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau. The organization can now tout entertainment and dining within walking distance of downtown hotels to prospective convention planners.

Because Albuquerque may not have as many hotel rooms as cities its same size, when competing for convention business Armenta says it helps to have centralized amenities close to where people are staying.

Meanwhile, DAT is working with private sponsors on a slate of summer activities to encourage downtown visitation, including Thursday night after-work entertainment in the Fourth Street Plaza, a grower's market and Summerfest.

"From a community standpoint, this adds to our wonderful quality of life," Lindsey said. "We have a fantastic environment in which we want to be outside, on the street with friends and our family."

Lindsey notes that among cities being chosen for relocation are those with vital downtowns. "You can tell the vibrancy of a city by the health of its downtown," she explains. "It's more exciting—it's more attractive to economic development." NMBJ

# THE LOFTS

at Albuquerque High



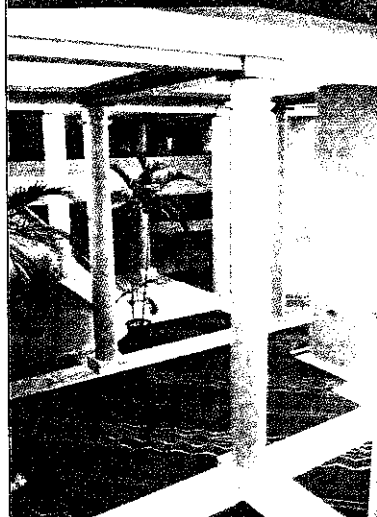
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