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## **New Mexico's First Two Arts and Culture Districts Announced**

SANTA FE, NM – The communities of Silver City and Las Vegas have been designated New Mexico's first Arts and Culture Districts, part of Governor Bill Richardson's Arts and Culture Districts Initiative

Economic Development Secretary Designate Fred Mondragón, along with Cultural Affairs Secretary Stuart Ashman and Tourism Secretary Mike Cerletti made the announcement at New Mexico MainStreet's Winter Quarterly Meeting. The new Arts and Culture Districts official logo was also unveiled.

"New Mexico's unique arts and cultural heritage sets it apart from the rest of the country," Governor Bill Richardson said. "This initiative will enhance our local economies and support our artists and cultural entrepreneurs."

"The Governor's Arts and Culture Districts Initiative is a very exciting development for our state," said Secretary Designate Mondragón during his remarks at the presentation. "The Districts will create market niches for downtowns that are based on New Mexico's unique arts and cultural attributes and give a boost to rural communities that depend on cultural tourism."

Also announced during the ceremony were the New Mexico MainStreet Program's new Start-Up communities of Deming and Lovington, as well as three Start Up communities that have graduated to full MainStreet affiliation: Clayton, Las Vegas and Raton.

### **About New Mexico Arts and Culture Districts**

Governor Richardson supported a legislative initiative in 2007 to create enabling legislation formally authorizing Arts and Cultural Districts for the state of New Mexico.

The initiative was passed during the 2007 Legislative Session, and is based on an interagency cooperative process with representatives from the Department of Cultural Affairs, Tourism Department and the Economic Development Department.

The enabling legislation identified New Mexico MainStreet Program Director Rich Williams as the Statewide Coordinator and the New Mexico Arts Commission of the Department of Cultural Affairs the authorizing governmental body.

The evaluation team included representatives from the New Mexico Museum Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation and contractors from the New Mexico MainStreet Program. This evaluation team made its final recommendations to the New Mexico Arts Commission for formal authorization in early January of this year.

The first two pilot districts are the result of the Governor's inter-agency initiatives to develop place-based economic development in New Mexico's communities. Five applicant communities participated: Las Cruces, Las Vegas, Portales, Raton and Silver City.

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