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New Mexico Arts Commission Authorizes Gallup, Mora and Artesia as New Arts & Cultural Districts

Santa Fe - For the first time since 2009, the New Mexico Arts Commission authorized three new Arts & Cultural District (ACD) programs. Mora, Gallup and Artesia were selected after a competitive application and review process. They join Las Vegas and Silver City, authorized in 2007, and Central Arts in Albuquerque, Los Alamos, Raton and Taos authorized in 2009.

"The ACD program is a great inter-agency collaboration to leverage state resources," said Economic Development Cabinet Secretary Jon Barela. "We were pleased that Governor Martinez and the Legislature provided new funding to the Economic Development Department to expand the program, our rural communities in particular depend on cultural tourism to support their local economies and build a better quality of life."

Arts and culture pump more than \$3.3 billion into New Mexico's economy and support about 60,000 jobs across our state, with a salary impact of \$952 million, according to figures from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

"The Arts Commission is very pleased to authorize these new Arts & Cultural Districts because of the importance of arts and culture as economic and tourism drivers in our state," Arts Commission Chair Sherry Davis said. "Benefits for state authorized districts include a doubling of state historic tax credits to renovate buildings for eligible properties, access to Local Economic Development Act funds to rehabilitate cultural facilities and marketing and branding in larger statewide tourism campaigns."

What is unique to this year's announcement is the first state authorization of an Arts & Cultural Compound in Mora County. An Arts & Cultural Compound has a unique cluster of historic structures that a community wishes to preserve and conserve to protect their heritage and culture.

Mora Plaza Arts & Cultural Compound - is part of the original Mora land grant. Mora has an incredible group of traditional artists, the Mora Valley Spinning Mill and Theater, the St. Vrain Mill, a Media Arts Cooperative (part of the Fiber Arts Trail), the Historic Plaza and St. Gertrude's Parish. Mora has a rich agrarian history represented in both the Los de Mora Local Growers Cooperative and the Sangre de Cristo Livestock Association.

Artesia - has become well known for its downtown monumental bronze arts sculptures that interpret the history of the community. Its restoration of the Ocotillo Theatre for the performing arts complements the historic Land and Sun movie theater for downtown night life. The Ocotillo hosts artisan workshops and an arts training center as well as providing arts gallery space. A new state of the art library within the downtown will house the huge Peter Herd mural saved from destruction and restored by local Foundations. Accommodations include the Historic Liberty Inn boutique hotel and the first newly built downtown hotel in New Mexico in more than a century. Restaurants, coffeehouse and a brewpub provide additional amenities to the community and visitors alike. The Artesia Arts Council works hand-in-hand with the Chamber and the Greater Artesia Economic Development Committee and Artesia MainStreet to program family and cultural events throughout the year.

Gallup - has maintained its historic corridor status for arts and culture for many generations. With the Railroad (and its historic depot restored with an interpretive museum and art space) and Historic Route 66, cultural tourists have been laying over in Gallup for years. Native American arts and culture are a major focus with both Zuni Pueblo and the Navajo Nation integrated into the fabric of a very diverse cultural community represented annually by the Gallup Inter-Tribal ceremonial. Trading posts, arts galleries, cafes, coffeehouses and restaurants all contribute to a vibrant cultural economy. The historic courthouse and courthouse plaza, the El Morro Theater, the Rex and Storyteller museums all add to a dynamic center for artists and cultural entrepreneurs to thrive in. Gallup Arts, Gallup MainStreet the downtown Gallup Business Improvement District work in collaboration with the Chamber, Greater Gallup Economic Development Organization and the City to program arts and cultural events year round.

"The Department of Cultural Affairs is pleased to welcome these new communities in to the ACD program," said Veronica N. Gonzales, Department of Cultural Affairs Cabinet Secretary. "These cultural districts showcase New Mexico's wonderful arts and cultural assets that make our state special and add so much to the quality of life of all New Mexicans."

The ACD program was established by state statute in 2007 to grow New Mexico's Cultural Economy within a walkable district with existing cultural and arts assets to enhance and the presence of art and artists and arts galleries. Drawing cultural and heritage tourists to support artists and cultural entrepreneurs and related industry segments (arts galleries, restaurants cafes and hotels), is one major drive of the program. A second key area of economic development is in the creative industries from light manufacturing, to digital media and tech transfer to new start up creative industry companies.

By state statute, the authorizing body in New Mexico is the New Mexico Arts Commission in the Department of Cultural Affairs while State Coordinator is delegated to the MainStreet Director in the Economic Development Department. State Authorized Arts & Cultural Districts receive technical assistance and resources to support their cultural economy efforts through an inter-agency group known as the State Arts & Cultural District Council. The Council has representation from Divisions of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Economic Development and Tourism and the McCune Foundation and the New Mexico Humanities Council.

The new start-up districts will receive a resource team of professional arts and culture consultants to assist the community in developing a pathway to enhance their cultural economy, funding for a municipally adopted cultural plan and master plan for the district.

For more information please contact MainStreet director, Rich Williams, rich.williams@state.nm.us.

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