

LAS CRUCES

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN





D R A F T D R A F T

18 MAY
2026

DRAFT

DOWNTOWN

M A S T E R P L A N



C I T Y O F L A S C R U C E S , N E W M E X I C O

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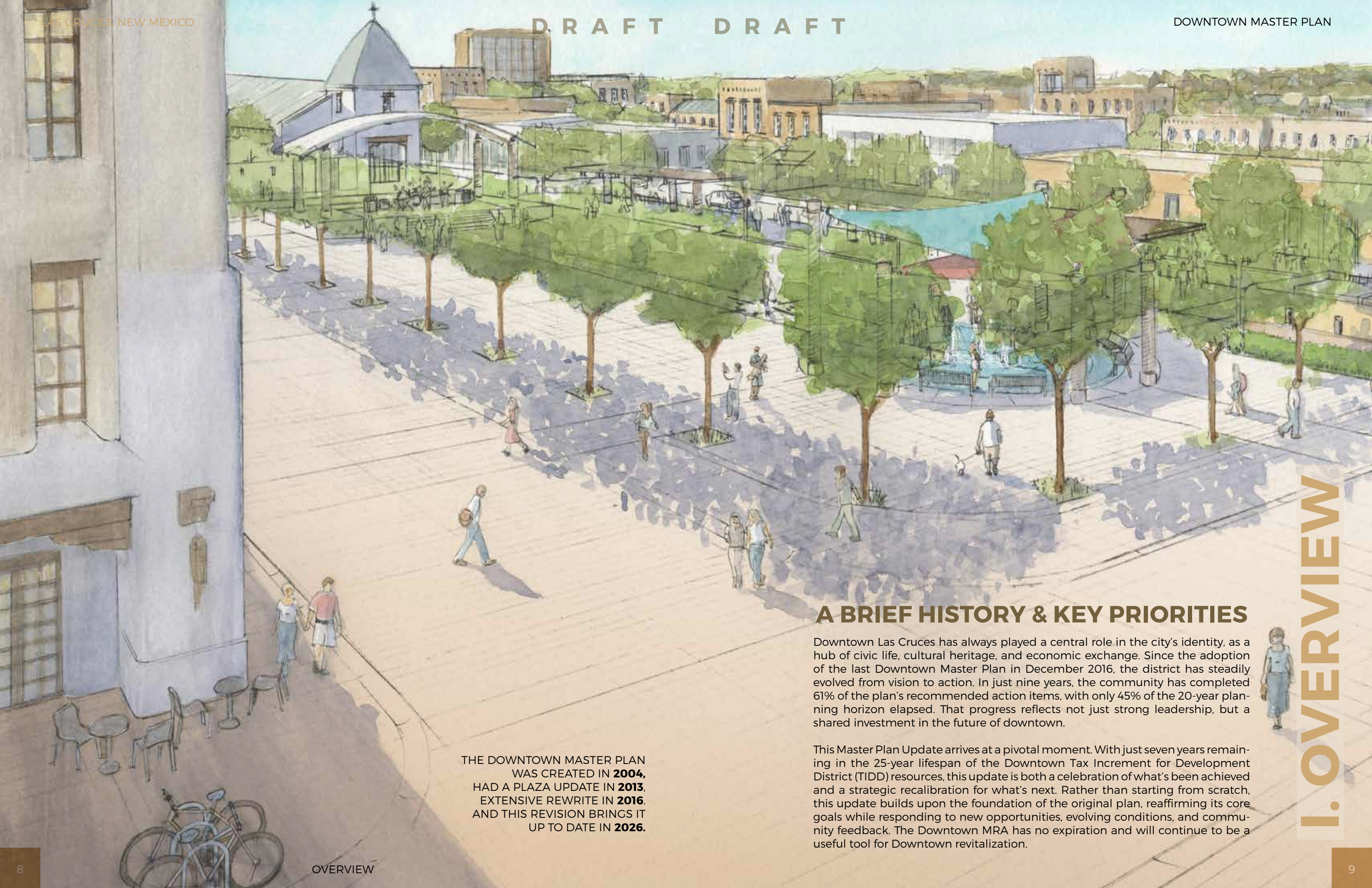
Draft

May 18, 2026

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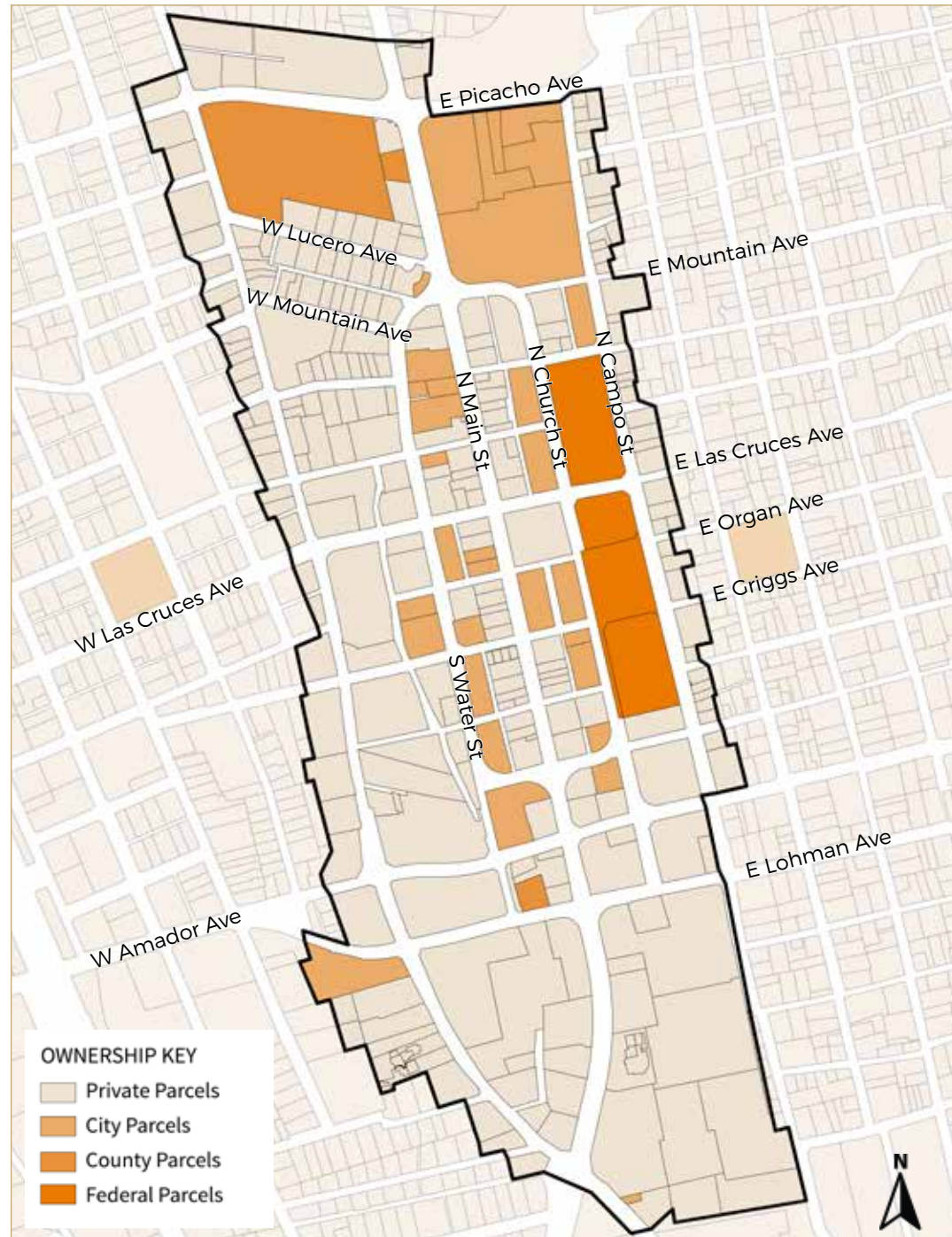


A BRIEF HISTORY & KEY PRIORITIES

Downtown Las Cruces has always played a central role in the city's identity, as a hub of civic life, cultural heritage, and economic exchange. Since the adoption of the last Downtown Master Plan in December 2016, the district has steadily evolved from vision to action. In just nine years, the community has completed 61% of the plan's recommended action items, with only 45% of the 20-year planning horizon elapsed. That progress reflects not just strong leadership, but a shared investment in the future of downtown.

This Master Plan Update arrives at a pivotal moment. With just seven years remaining in the 25-year lifespan of the Downtown Tax Increment for Development District (TIDD) resources, this update is both a celebration of what's been achieved and a strategic recalibration for what's next. Rather than starting from scratch, this update builds upon the foundation of the original plan, reaffirming its core goals while responding to new opportunities, evolving conditions, and community feedback. The Downtown MRA has no expiration and will continue to be a useful tool for Downtown revitalization.

THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN WAS CREATED IN **2004**, HAD A PLAZA UPDATE IN **2013**, EXTENSIVE REWRITE IN **2016**. AND THIS REVISION BRINGS IT UP TO DATE IN **2026**.



The 2016 Downtown Master Plan was developed through an intensive, community-based design charrette that compressed months of dialogue into a focused, collaborative process. That approach established a locally grounded vision for a more lively, prosperous, and inclusive downtown, informed by technical analysis and

shaped by residents, business owners, elected officials, and staff. The 2025 update continues this tradition. It affirms the long-standing commitment to Downtown's role as a mixed-use city center and to meaningful connections to the adjoining Mesquite and Alameda Depot neighborhoods, while sharpening the focus on

near-term implementation and accelerating progress where momentum already exists. Across public sessions, design studios, and one-on-one conversations, consistent themes emerged. The community voiced a desire for more housing in type and price, to support small businesses, reduce vacancies, and

strengthen the district's livability. They emphasized the importance of pedestrian and bicycle safety, particularly along connections between downtown and the Alameda Depot and Mesquite neighborhoods. And they elevated the need for comfort and resilience in the desert climate, calling for more shade through tree planting and built structures, better lighting, and public amenities like water fountains, seating, and accessible restrooms.

Alongside these design principles, the update also takes a closer look at near-term implementation. Participants helped prioritize catalyst sites, identify streets ready for walkability upgrades, and propose adaptive reuse strategies for historic buildings. Visualizations developed during the charrette offer a glimpse of what's possible: redeveloped city-owned parcels that blend housing, retail, and green space; shaded paseo-style callejitas; and reimagined intersections that favor people over cars. This plan captures the full scope of that work: the ideas generated, the challenges named, the priorities agreed upon, and the strategies that will carry Las Cruces forward. It honors the community's past investments, celebrates the momentum already in motion, and charts a clear, implementable path for the years ahead.

Downtown Las Cruces saw a boost to its

WalkScore in the decade since the last master plan update, from 75 to 86 Very Walkable. This bump indicates a draw to national retailers as well, who usually look for a score of 80 or higher to open a new downtown store. (Walk Score, Downtown Las Cruces, NM, www.walkscore.com)

This plan update affirms the policy to ramp up the effort by concentrating the development focus in the short term on sections of the Downtown that are the best candidates for incubating a critical mass of walkable, mixed-use development that inspires broader private sector investment and public-private partnerships in the long term.

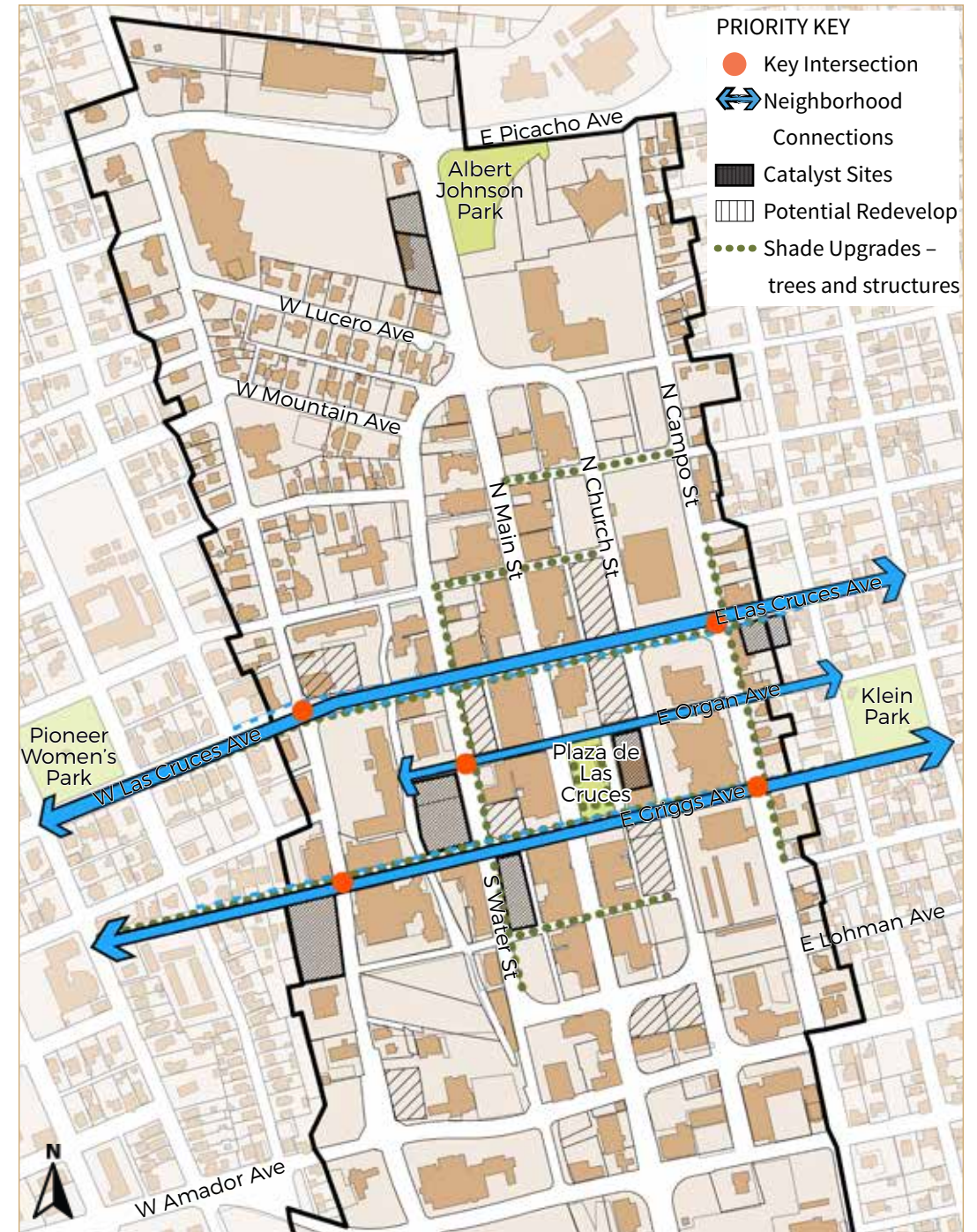
High-priority strategies include:

PRIORITY 1. CONNECTED

Reconnect Mesquite and Alameda Depot neighborhoods to the downtown by restoring clear, welcoming paths that make coming home feel natural again, so longtime neighbors can move easily, safely, and confidently between daily life and the heart of the city that has always been theirs.

PRIORITY 2. INHABITED

Support everyday downtown living by expanding housing choices near jobs and services, and by adding the basics that make a downtown work, including a grocer and other daily needs, so students, families, workers, elders, and newcomers can all belong downtown at different stages of life.



PRIORITY 3. LIVABLE

Cultivate downtown joy by shaping streets and public spaces that invite lingering, conversation, music, rest, and celebration, where shade, trees, green space, light, and programming turn everyday moments into reasons to stay a little longer in this complete community.

These priorities align with the 2020 Comprehensive Plan and translate its city-wide policy framework into focused, place-based action for Downtown. They advance community environment goals through compact development and multimodal connectivity, support community prosperity by strengthening Downtown as a lived-in

economic center, and enhance community livability by prioritizing comfort, access to amenities, and active public spaces. Together, they position the Downtown Master Plan Update as a practical tool for implementing the City's long-term policy direction.

CONTEXT



MAIN STREET

II. CONTEXT

WHAT WE KNOW

PERSPECTIVE: Understanding the Downtown framework sets the stage for effective planning.

MESILLA VALLEY HERITAGE

LAS CRUCES' STORIED HISTORY

Las Cruces is located at the geographic center of the Mesilla Valley, a historic crossroads along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, the trade route linking central Mexico to Santa Fe. Long before the city's founding in 1849, the valley supported Indigenous communities and later Spanish and Mexican settlements shaped by agriculture, water access, and trade. Over time, Native American nations, Spain, Mexico, the United States, and briefly the Confederacy, each exerted control over the region, leaving layered cultural and physical legacies that continue to define Las Cruces today (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

Fertile soils and access to Rio Grande water

supported some of the most productive farmland in New Mexico, while proximity to regional trade routes connected the Mesilla Valley to both Mexican and United States markets. Farmers, ranchers, soldiers, traders, educators, and students shaped life along the river, reinforcing the valley's role as both an agricultural landscape and a cultural meeting place (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

The original town site of Las Cruces was established approximately six miles south of Doña Ana near a stand of wooden crosses marking graves of travelers and soldiers, giving the city its name. In 1849, U.S. Army surveyors laid out the town in 84 blocks, reserving land for a church and cemetery

and distributing remaining parcels by lottery among founding families. This early planning approach helped establish a compact, walkable settlement pattern that continues to influence Downtown's form today (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

Limited access to timber in the high desert led to widespread use of adobe

construction, with cottonwood vigas for roof supports and acequia systems for irrigation. These building traditions and water-management practices shaped the architectural and urban character of Downtown Las Cruces and its surrounding neighborhoods (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

MEMORY OF PLACE



Downtown, Mesquite, and the Legacy of Urban Renewal

Downtown Las Cruces is bordered by the Mesquite Historic District to the east and the Alameda Depot Historic District to the west. While closely connected geographically, these areas reflect different development eras and planning decisions.

Downtown experienced significant disruption during the mid-twentieth century as a result of federally subsidized Urban Renewal programs. Large-scale demolition, surface parking, one-way traffic systems, and auto-oriented design altered the historic fabric and weakened long-established economic, social, and cultural

networks. Later efforts to reverse some of these changes, including reopening Main Street to automobile access, have helped restore activity but also underscore the importance of context-sensitive planning (von Maur 2014). The experience of Urban Renewal highlights a central lesson for the Downtown Master Plan Update:

physical form matters. Street design, building placement, and land-use patterns play a critical role in supporting social, cultural, and economic resilience. Adaptive reuse of historic structures and respect for local building traditions remain essential to Downtown's long-term vitality.



MESQUITE

To the east, the Mesquite Historic District escaped most of the bulldozers and still faces Campo Street with charming one-story adobes. It is the original town site along the Camino Real and was platted in 1849.

In contrast to Downtown, the streets here are narrow with few parking lots, lined by one-room-wide adobe homes with portales, small shop fronts, and garden walls.

In Klein Park, families gather under a tree at the corner where the first settlers cast lots for the newly surveyed properties. It's a place with thriving families, some economic struggles, many hip, renovated historic properties, and popular coffee shops. The homes are economical, close to the street. It's a place that works and is loved by those that live there.

A 2006 ceramic tile mural stands in Jardin de Mesquite as a vivid memorial. The work was commissioned by Las Esperanzas, "the hopeful ones," a civic organization founded by a group of concerned women in the 1980s, and found a critical leadership role to help reduce crime and uplift community pride. After years of hard work and collaboration, Mesquite is back on its feet, thriving within the same resilient blocks and buildings built generations ago.

The demolition of the city center is understood as a planning mistake. While the losses of Downtown Las Cruces through Urban Renewal are still felt, the experience of the past underscores how the physical environment helps to support social, cultural, and economic resilience. And how repurposing of historic

structures contributes to that resilience.

The Las Cruces Downtown Master Plan seeks to understand the significance of the simple, time-honored forms of common buildings. The essentials are inspired by local traditions: a good frontage, with openings, walls, shelter, service and parking just in the right place for both residents and pedestrians.

An equally supportive environment that existed in Downtown Las Cruces. Of course it wasn't perfect and was showing its age, as does Mesquite. But it supported approximately 160 businesses on Main Street. Within three years of the pedestrian mall's completion, that number dropped to 90. (Las Esperanzas Inc., 2016) In 2005, there were fewer than 10. This kind of history should inspire respect.

In city planning, this means respect for private properties, and the law of unintended consequences. It means respect for time-honored forms that have proven to be economical, resilient and capable of renewed purpose. It means respect for communities and the local particulars that enable them to thrive in the long term.

Honoring the Las Cruces Urban Character with Local Essentials

Las Esperanzas and Mesquite have led the way in demonstrating the essentials of walkable urbanism. In partnership with the city's planning department, the neighborhood pushed for its own neighborhood plan, zoning overlay district and code. (Las Esperanzas Inc., 2007) It's a clear, context-sensitive, and character-based zoning that encourages all of the essentials for Mesquite: mixed-use, higher densities, and excellent private building frontages. (von Maur, 2014)

- MESQUITE IS FULL OF THESE ESSENTIALS:
- SIMPLE FORMS THAT PROMOTE ECONOMY AND FLEXIBILITY
- PROPORTIONS THAT ENABLE NATURAL COOLING AND VENTILATION
- ARRANGEMENTS THAT ENABLE EFFICIENT LAND USE AND INCREMENTAL GENERATIONAL GROWTH
- ELEMENTS THAT CULTIVATE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OUTDOOR LIFE
- DISPOSITIONS THAT ENABLE DISCREET PARKING AND STORAGE
- DETAILS AND COLORS THAT PROMOTE JOY AND IDENTITY



ALAMEDA DEPOT



The Alameda Depot Historic District, west of Downtown, shares much of the walkable urban form of Mesquite, but with distinct architectural styles. Platted after the 1881 construction of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Depot, Alameda is the earliest addition to the townsite. The 42 blocks, centered on Pioneer Women’s Park, span about a half mile, extending up Alameda Boulevard.

Clustered near the railroad depot and along the old Camino Real (now Alameda Boulevard), the district clearly demonstrates the historic importance of transportation routes to New Mexican urbanism. Homes here combine vernacular adobe with styles enabled by the new rail deliveries. Of the over 300 structures in the district, 192 are considered historically significant. (Alameda Depot Historic District Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1985)

The railway brought building materials, jobs, and people, including the Chicago-trained architect Henry Trost, who, along with his brother Gustavus, designed many homes along Depot Avenue (Las Cruces Avenue). By 1910, all the land in Alameda

Depot had been subdivided into streets and lots, with many of the buildings completed in the 1880s and 1890s. Today, this historic district—thanks to its depth of history and careful preservation—is a significant part of Downtown Las Cruces’ appeal. (Alameda Depot Historic District Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1985)

Three important civic anchors are Pioneer Women’s Park, the Las Cruces Railroad Museum, and Alma D’arte Charter High School. The historic Santa Fe Railroad Depot now houses the Las Cruces Railroad Museum and hosts temporary exhibitions, while Alma D’arte Charter High School is housed in the historic Court Junior High School, which opened in 1941. (Alma D’arte Charter High School, 2016)

Though there is limited room for infill, the neighborhood presents a number of opportunities to connect and leverage its amenities. This plan honors the district’s history and acknowledges that its attractiveness is a significant part of what draws people to Downtown. This historic neighborhood should continue to be protected and honored as a vital element of the Downtown Las Cruces urban fabric.



PEOPLE

LAS CRUCES PROFILE

DEMOGRAPHICS



Las Cruces continues to grow, with a population of 111,385 residents recorded in the 2020 U.S. Census, up from 97,618 in 2010, reflecting sustained growth over the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). More recent Census Bureau population estimates indicate continued growth to 116,998 estimated in 2024, reinforcing the need to plan for housing, services, and infrastructure across the city (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

The city's population is diverse. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, approximately 60% of Las Cruces residents identify as Hispanic or Latino of any race, with the remaining population composed of White non-Hispanic, Black or African American, Asian, Native American, and multiracial residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). This diversity shapes community needs, cultural assets, and participation in civic and planning processes.

Median household income in Las Cruces is approximately \$55,176, with per capita income of about \$30,804, based on inflation-adjusted American Community Survey estimates for 2019–2023. The poverty rate remains elevated, with about 22% of residents living below the poverty line, underscoring ongoing affordability and economic challenges (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

Educational attainment has increased over time. Recent American Community Survey estimates show

that about 88% of adults age 25 and over have a high school diploma or higher, and approximately 37% hold a bachelor's degree or higher, reflecting improvements in educational outcomes that support workforce development and long-term economic prospects (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

The labor force participation rate for residents age 16 and older is approximately 59%, and the mean travel time to work is about 18.7 minutes, consistent with commuting patterns in a mixed urban and regional setting (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

Housing characteristics have shifted since 2016. Based on 2019–2023 American Community Survey estimates, Las Cruces has approximately 46,661 households with an average household size of 2.39 persons, a median home value of about \$217,400, and median gross rent of approximately \$946 per month. About 56% of housing units are owner-occupied, indicating a balance between ownership and rental housing that influences housing policy and development strategy (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.).

The presence of New Mexico State University continues to shape local demographics, contributing to a relatively young population profile and a significant student presence, with implications for housing demand, workforce participation, and service needs.

POPULATION

- 116,998 (2024)
- 2nd largest city in NM
- Grew +14% (2010–20)
- Households (ACS 2019–2023): ~47,000
- Average household size: 2.39 persons

INCOME

- Median household income: \$55,176.
- Income per person: \$30,800
- Residents living below poverty line: 22%

HOME VALUES

- Median home value: \$217,400
- Median rent: \$946

*** 116,998 PEOPLE**

*** MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME \$55,176**

*** AGRICULTURE, AEROSPACE, AND DEFENSE INDUSTRIES**

*** NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY**

HOUSING MARKET

- Owner-occupied: 56%
- Renter-occupied: 44%
- Vacancy rate: 17%
- Mix: single-family, with growing demand for attached and multi-family

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

- High school grad (age 25+): 88%
- Bachelor's degree (age 25+): 37%
- Labor force participation (age 16+): 59%
- Mean commute time: 19 minutes
- Major institutional anchor: New Mexico State University

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census; ACS 2019–2023; City of Las Cruces, 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

PORTATION (H+T) % OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME

- Citywide: 50%
- Downtown: 45%
- Affordability benchmark: ≤ 45%
- Downtown Walk Score: 87 Very Walkable (up from 75 in 2016) at fixed downtown reference location of N. Main St. at W. Las Cruces Ave.

Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology, Housing + Transportation Affordability Index; City of Las Cruces; Walk Score.

HOUSING + TRANS-

ECONOMY



AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE runs deep in Las Cruces, as the hub of farming and markets. Big crops include pecans, grapes, chile, corn, beans, and onions.

ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT



FARMERS & CRAFTS MARKET



RIO GRANDE

Las Cruces is the economic center of the Mesilla Valley, a region with a long history of farming supported by fertile soils and access to Rio Grande water. Agriculture remains a key component of the regional economy, with major crops including pecans, grapes, chile, onions, corn, and beans. Doña Ana County is consistently among the leading agricultural producers in New Mexico, particularly for pecans and chile, reinforcing Las Cruces' role as a hub for agricultural processing and markets (New Mexico Department of Agriculture n.d.; U.S. Department of Agriculture 2022).

Las Cruces has experienced sustained long-term growth, growing from 37,857 residents in 1970 to an estimated 116,998 in 2024, more than tripling over the past five decades (U.S. Census Bureau 1970; U.S. Census Bureau n.d.). This growth reflects the city's role as a regional center for education, employment, and services. The city's economy is anchored by New Mexico State University, the state's only land-grant university, located approximately three miles south of Downtown. NMSU plays a major role in research, workforce development, and innovation, particularly in agriculture, engineering, and science-based fields (New Mexico State University n.d.).

Downtown Las Cruces serves as a cultural center for the region. Major cultural institutions include the Las Cruces Museum of Art, Branigan Cultural Center, Las Cruces Museum of Nature & Science, and Las Cruces Railroad Museum. Together, these venues support

arts, education, heritage tourism, and community programming (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

Community events and markets play an important role in Downtown's economic and social life. The Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces, held weekly in Downtown, is one of the longest-running farmers markets in the state and regularly activates multiple blocks of Main Street with local vendors, food, and crafts. The market, along with annual events and celebrations, contributes to Downtown's identity as a year-round gathering place (Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces n.d.; City of Las Cruces n.d.).

Las Cruces offers exceptional access to outdoor recreation through a combination of well-maintained city parks and an extraordinary network of nearby federal and state public lands. The City maintains an extensive system of neighborhood and community parks, trails, sports fields, and recreational facilities that serve residents of all ages. These local amenities are significantly enhanced by the city's proximity to major public lands, including Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, White Sands National Park, Prehistoric Trackways National Monument, and the Dripping

Springs Natural Area. Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument, located immediately east of the city, encompasses vast areas of protected Chihuahuan Desert landscape with opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and exploration of cultural and historic sites.

White Sands National Park, less than an hour from Las Cruces, offers globally unique gypsum dune fields and recreational opportunities such as hiking, sledding, camping, and ranger-led programs, while Prehistoric Trackways National Monument preserves rare Paleozoic fossilized footprints and supports hiking and educational activities. Together, these nationally significant landscapes greatly expand recreational access beyond the city's park system and contribute to tourism, quality of life, workforce attraction, and economic development. The integration of municipal parks with nearby national monuments and parks distinguishes Las Cruces as a community where daily life is closely connected to protected and accessible natural landscapes (U.S. National Park Service n.d.; City of Las Cruces n.d.).

ENVIRONMENT



ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

Las Cruces is located in a high desert environment characterized by sunny days, limited rainfall, prolonged heat, periodic drought, and localized flooding during intense storm events. These environmental conditions directly influence how Downtown functions and how it must evolve. To support Downtown's continued reinvestment as the civic and economic heart of the city, the public realm must provide comfortable, safe conditions for walking and bicycling, particularly during warmer months when shade, cooling, and water management are critical (National Weather Service; City of Las Cruces n.d.).

WATER AND FLOODING

Most of Downtown and the Mesquite



neighborhood are classified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as areas of minimal flood hazard. However, localized flooding does occur during heavy storms, particularly given the intensity of summer monsoon rainfall. Portions of the Alameda Depot neighborhood lie within areas of higher flood risk due to proximity to historic drainage patterns and lower-lying topography (Federal Emergency Management Agency n.d.).



Green infrastructure strategies such as pervious surfaces, tree planting, and shaded corridors play an important role in managing stormwater while also mitigating urban heat. In Downtown, historic callecitas, or streets closed to traffic during mid-twentieth-century redevelopment, present opportunities to reintroduce permeable surfaces and multifunctional corridors that accommodate both pedestrian movement and stormwater conveyance.

URBAN FORM

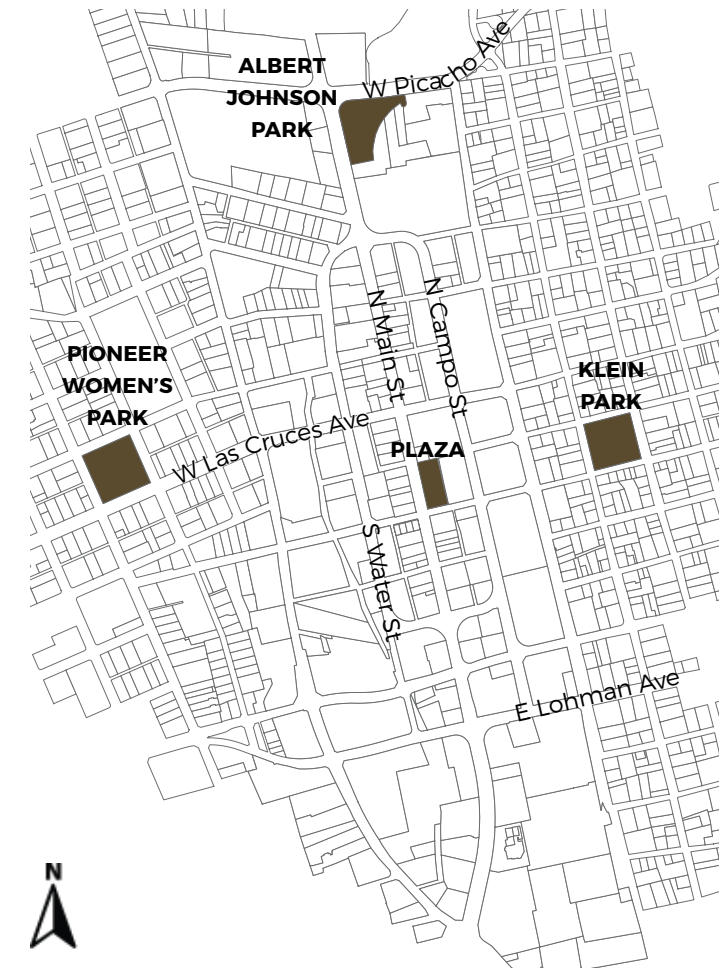
Downtown Las Cruces benefits from a compact, traditional block structure that supports walkability. While the citywide Walk Score reflects an auto-oriented development pattern overall, Downtown's fine-grained street network, short blocks, and mix of uses contribute to a substantially higher level of walkability than the city average (Walk Score n.d.). However, walkability metrics alone do not capture critical qualitative factors such as sidewalk condition, building frontage, lighting, or the availability of shade, all of which significantly affect pedestrian comfort in a high desert climate.

Historic Las Cruces was laid out in a connected grid pattern with blocks



STREET NETWORK

of approximately 300 feet, neighborhood squares, and a forecourt, or informal plaza, associated with St. Genevieve Church at the heart of the original townsite. This block pattern extends roughly 25 blocks east to west and 12 blocks north to south, encompassing Downtown as well as the Mesquite and Alameda Depot neighborhoods. While this network remains legible today, portions were altered or fragmented during Urban Renewal, reducing connectivity and pedestrian



PARK SPACE

comfort in some areas. Neighborhood parks further support walkability and livability. Klein Memorial Park in Mesquite and Pioneer Women's Park in Alameda Depot, each approximately two acres in size, provide shaded green spaces and social gathering areas within walking distance of Downtown. Together, these parks serve as neighborhood anchors and important pedestrian destinations. Plaza de Las Cruces on Main Street, opened in

September 2016, adds a central civic space that supports markets, performances, and festivals, reinforcing Downtown's role as a shared public realm. Albert Johnson Park, provides additional shaded green space downtown (City of Las Cruces n.d.). The historic forecourt of St. Genevieve Church functioned as the original civic plaza of Las Cruces. The current Plaza, located one block south, continues this tradition.



AERIAL VIEW OF ST. GENEVIEVE CHURCH, DATE UNKNOWN (LEYVA)

ARTS & CULTURE

CULTURE, ARTS, SCIENCES, AND HISTORY GET MIXED UP IN CURRENT EVENTS AND GOINGS-ON

MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL ASSETS

Gravitate to Downtown

Quality of life in Las Cruces is enhanced by the concentration of arts, culture, and public spaces in and around Downtown. These cultural assets serve not only as destinations for residents and visitors, but also as everyday gathering places that support social connection, learning, and civic identity. In this context, creative placemaking extends beyond artistic production to include the physical settings, institutions, and public spaces that support cultural life and connect it to the community.

The City of Las Cruces' civic museums are clustered Downtown and in the adjacent Alameda Depot, creating a strong cultural spine anchored along Main Street. The City's museum system includes the Branigan Cultural Center, the Las Cruces Museum of Art, the Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science, and the Las Cruces Railroad Museum. Three of these museums are located along Main Street, with the Railroad Museum housed in the historic Santa Fe Railroad

Depot in Alameda Depot. Together, these institutions provide accessible opportunities to engage with local history, contemporary art, science education, and regional heritage (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

Downtown's cultural role is reinforced by performance venues and events, concerts, film screenings, and performing arts programming, while the Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces brings art, music, food, and crafts into the public

realm on a weekly basis. Other civic assets, such as the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library and Amador Hotel, provide important downtown anchors. These activities contribute to Downtown's identity as a year-round cultural and social center (Rio Grande Theatre n.d.; Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces n.d.).

VISUAL ARTS

Visual arts in Downtown Las Cruces reflect a combination of public institutions, private galleries, and artist-run spaces. The Las Cruces Museum of Art presents rotating exhibitions featuring contemporary artists from local, national, and international contexts and

supports arts education through studio programs for all ages. New Mexico State University's Department of Art contributes to the cultural ecosystem through academic programs in studio art, design, art history, and conservation, strengthening the link between higher education and the local arts

community (Las Cruces Museum of Art n.d.; New Mexico State University n.d.).

In addition to public institutions, Downtown and nearby neighborhoods host a range of private galleries, studios, and creative businesses. These spaces support local artists, provide exhibition

opportunities, and contribute to the everyday vitality of Downtown. The Farmers & Crafts Market also serves as an important venue for artists and artisans to share and sell their work directly to the public (Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces n.d.).

PERFORMING ARTS

Performing arts are a long-standing component of Downtown's cultural life. The Rio Grande Theatre, established in 1926, remains a key anchor on Main Street and serves as a home for live music, film, and community events. The theatre also houses





arts organizations and gallery space, reinforcing its role as a cultural hub (Rio Grande Theatre n.d.).

New Mexico State University supports professional and educational performing arts through affiliated organizations such as the American Southwest Theatre Company and the School

of Music, which hosts ensembles including the Mesilla Valley Concert Band. Community-based organizations such as Las Cruces Community Theatre and No Strings Theatre provide opportunities for local performers, playwrights, and audiences to engage with a wide range of theatrical forms,

from classical productions to experimental and contemporary works (New Mexico State University n.d.; Las Cruces Community Theatre n.d.; No Strings Theatre n.d.).

The City of Las Cruces Film Office supports film and media production by serving as a liaison between filmmakers

and local resources and by promoting state-level incentives that encourage production activity in the region (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

SCIENCE AND HISTORY MUSEUMS

Downtown's museums provide accessible learning opportunities across age groups and interests.



The Las Cruces Museum of Nature and Science offers interactive exhibits focused on regional ecology, geology, and science education, with bilingual interpretive materials. The Las Cruces Railroad Museum interprets the city's railroad history and its role in the development of southern New Mexico, using the historic depot as both exhibit

space and artifact (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

The Branigan Cultural Center focuses on local and regional history, hosting permanent and temporary exhibits as well as lectures, classes, and special events. The building itself is a historic adobe structure listed on the National and State Registers of Historic

Places, contributing to Downtown's architectural character (City of Las Cruces n.d.).

FESTIVALS

Festivals and recurring events are central to Downtown's cultural identity. The Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces activates Main Street on a weekly basis and has

operated for decades, making it one of the longest-running markets in the state. Seasonal events, parades, art fairs, and cultural celebrations further animate Downtown and reinforce its role as a shared civic space for the broader community (Farmers & Crafts Market of Las Cruces n.d.; City of Las Cruces n.d.).

PLANS AND AMBITIONS



2004 DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

Main Street open to traffic | Rio Grande Theater renovated | Federal Courthouse constructed | Tax Increment for Downtown District | Optimized shade



1994 R/UDAT

St. Genevieve Memorial | Government facilities remain Downtown | Landscape upgrades | Removal of Main St canopy | Downtown RoadRUNNER Central Transfer Point | Las Cruces Farmers & Crafts Market | Marketing & Branding Plan



2011 AD HOC COMMITTEE & 2012 PARKING STUDY

Support reconfiguring Water and Church as two-way streets, housing, zoning updates, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, sufficient parking, development responds to market rather than enforce parking minimums | Evaluate a pay parking pilot



2013 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Build a Plaza as the heart of Downtown Las Cruces, with gathering places of a bandstand, splash pad, seating, and shade | Reconstruct Water and Church as two-way streets | Zoning and subdivision regulations drafted and adopted



2016 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Evaluate past planning successes with a careful analysis of market realities to determine investment priorities for Downtown.



2026 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Refresh the 2016 plan in alignment with 2020 Comprehensive Plan and 2025 Land Development Code, with an emphasis on catalyst sites and actions.

GOALS

III. GOALS
WHERE WE WANT TO GO



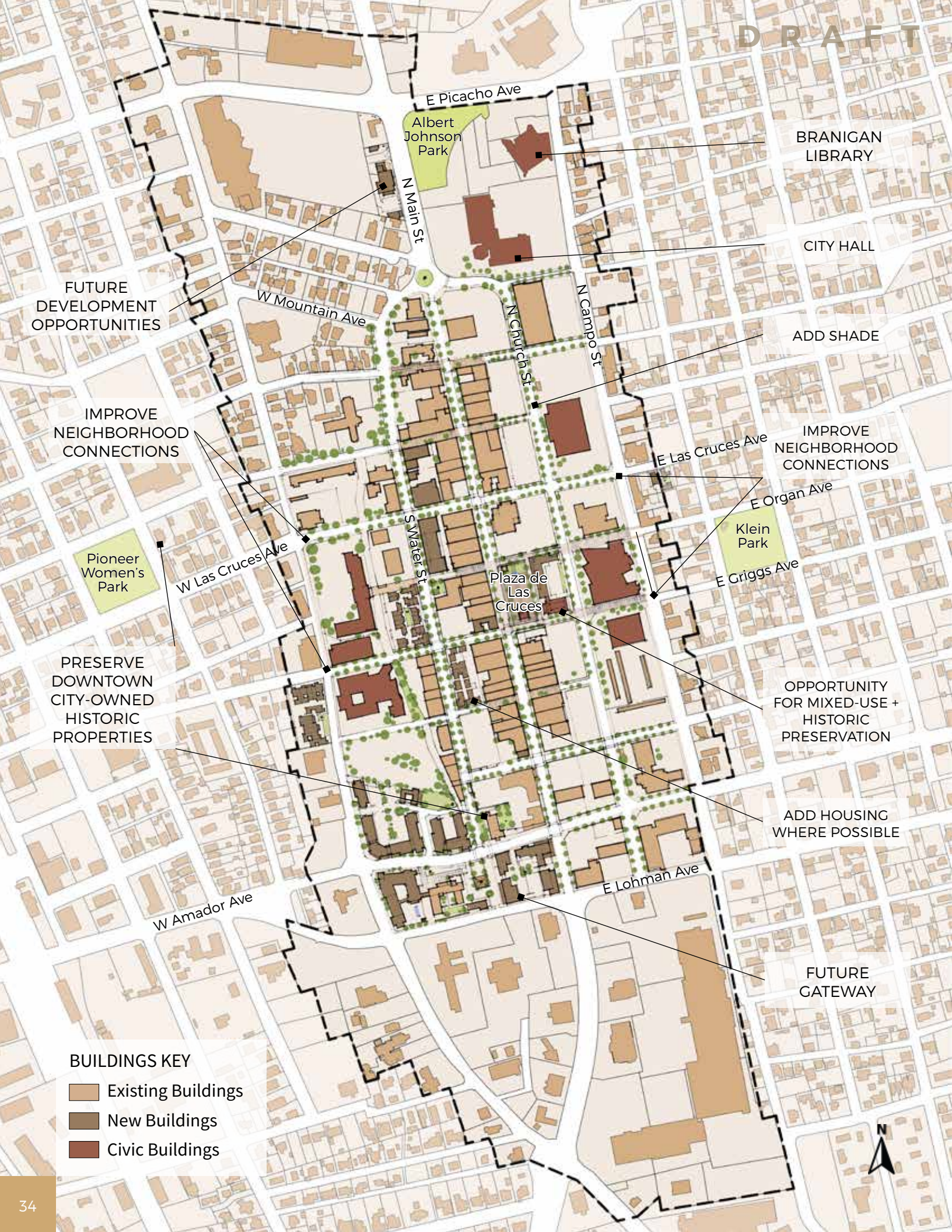
REDEVELOPMENT



EXISTING CONDITION

PLAZA EAST SIDE
REDEVELOPMENT

Adaptive reuse and preservation of historic post office after future relocation of municipal court. Infill with condos or apartments over retail and dining at the street level.



MASTER PLAN

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS AND DESIGN ARE SHAPED BY THEMES FROM THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.



LIVABILITY



PROSPERITY



ENVIRONMENT

The goals of the Downtown Las Cruces 2026 Master Plan Update will translate community priorities and charrette outcomes into a clear, actionable framework aligned with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Rather than standing alone, these goals intentionally reinforce the Comprehensive Plan's three integrated policy themes of Community Environment, Community Prosperity, and Community Livability recognizing Downtown's role as both a place and a system that advances citywide sustainability objectives. Grounded in the October 2025 charrette process and informed by progress since 2016, the updated goals focus on targeted reinvestment, catalyst sites, public realm improvements, and implementation-ready actions that strengthen Downtown's economic vitality, social life, and environmental performance while remaining consistent with long-term community values and adopted policy direction.



COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

ALIGNED WITH 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
COMMUNITY LIVABILITY GOALS CL-1 THROUGH CL-19



GOAL 1: STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN AS CONNECTED EXTENSION OF ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Improve physical, social, and functional connections between Downtown, Mesquite, and Alameda Depot by addressing streetscape design with emphasis on safety and comfort for pedestrians, bicyclists, seniors, and children. This directly responds to long-standing barriers to neighborhoods and aligns with 2020 Comp Plan goals of neighborhood identity, multimodal safety, and transportation-land use integration.

GOAL 2: ENHANCE THE COMFORT, SAFETY, AND USABILITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Create a Downtown environment that supports daily use by residents, workers, and visitors with improved shade, lighting, seating, wayfinding, and accessible amenities. The importance of comfort in the desert climate and the need for Downtown to function as an everyday place, not solely an event destination, reinforces 2020 Comprehensive Plan goals for accessible social spaces, public health, and transportation safety.

GOAL 3: REINFORCE DOWNTOWN AS A CIVIC AND CULTURAL GATHERING PLACE

Support Downtown's role as the city's primary civic and cultural hub by strengthening public spaces, cultural venues, and programming that serve a wide range of ages, cultures, and abilities. This goal reflects community priorities expressed during the charrette for inclusive, family-friendly spaces and aligns with 2020 Comprehensive Plan goals related to arts, culture, tourism, and community engagement.

COMMUNITY PROSPERITY

ALIGNED WITH 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
COMMUNITY PROSPERITY GOALS CP-1 THROUGH CP-11



GOAL 1: SUPPORT A DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE DOWNTOWN ECONOMY

Encourage a mix of locally owned businesses, arts and cultural enterprises, and neighborhood-serving uses that reflect the diversity of the Las Cruces community. Charrette discussions emphasized the importance of economic opportunity that benefits existing residents and entrepreneurs, aligning with 2020 Comprehensive Plan goals for economic fairness, entrepreneurship, and diversification.

GOAL 2: ADD RESIDENTS TO SUPPORT DOWNTOWN VITALITY

Increase the number of people living Downtown through context-sensitive housing development on underutilized sites, particularly City-owned parcels, while respecting the character and livability of adjacent historic neighborhoods. This goal supports 2020 Comprehensive Plan housing objectives related to attainable housing, housing diversity, and efficient use of existing infrastructure.

GOAL 3: FOCUS PUBLIC INVESTMENT TO CATALYZE PRIVATE REINVESTMENT

Use targeted public actions, including infrastructure improvements, zoning support, and strategic reuse of public land, to catalyze private investment in key Downtown locations. This reflects charrette priorities to concentrate near-term effort on sites with the greatest potential to generate momentum and aligns with 2020 Comprehensive Plan goals for ready workforce, economic outcomes, and coordinated service delivery.

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

ALIGNED WITH 2020 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT GOALS CE-1 THROUGH CE-16



GOAL 1: REINFORCE DOWNTOWN AS A CENTER OF COMPACT, MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Direct growth to Downtown in a manner that supports compact urban form, walkability, and efficient land use, consistent with 2020 Comprehensive Plan goals for balanced growth, centers and corridors, and complete neighborhoods. Charrette participants repeatedly emphasized making better use of existing Downtown land and infrastructure rather than expanding outward.

GOAL 2: IMPROVE CLIMATE RESPONSIVENESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

Integrate shade, trees, green infrastructure, and heat-mitigating design strategies into streets, public spaces, and redevelopment sites to address high desert climate conditions. This goal reflects charrette feedback on comfort and resilience and aligns with 2020 Comprehensive Plan goals related to energy efficiency, air quality, water management, and environmental justice.

GOAL 3: RESPECT AND REINFORCE HISTORIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Ensure that new development, streetscape improvements, and adaptive reuse projects respect Downtown's historic patterns, buildings, and cultural landscapes, particularly in relation to the Mesquite and Alameda Depot historic districts. This goal supports 2020 Comprehensive Plan objectives related to community character, historic and cultural values, and context-sensitive design.



The Comprehensive Plan supports livability by strengthening neighborhood identity, parks and recreation, multimodal mobility, public safety, arts and culture, historic values, public health, and environmental justice. Las Cruces benefits from exceptional assets, yet community health challenges remain, including access to healthy food and opportunities for daily physical activity. A well-connected, walkable, mixed-use Downtown supports healthier lifestyles by active transportation, access to services, and environments that make walking and biking safe, practical, and inviting.

ACCESS TO FOOD

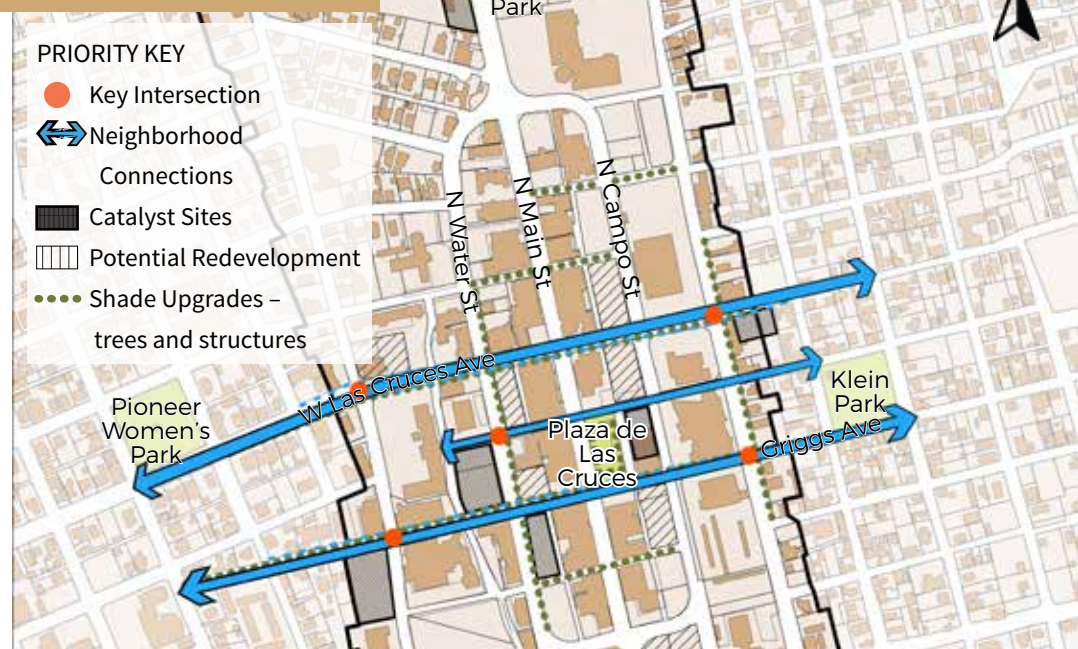
Access to household necessities is essential to Downtown functioning as a complete, livable neighborhood. A downtown grocery store is a major gap. Supporting a grocery store or urban food market would strengthen local quality of life, reduce reliance on driving, and reinforce Downtown as a place to live. Grocery access is a catalytic investment that supports housing viability, local employment, and neighborhood-serving retail, and should be prioritized through site selection, zoning flexibility, infrastructure support, and public-private partnership strategies.



NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

A central priority for Downtown is restoring clear, safe, and comfortable walking and bicycling connections between the Plaza and surrounding neighborhoods. While Mesquite and Alameda Depot are adjacent to Downtown, gaps in the street network and limited pedestrian crossings continue to constrain access. Las Cruces Avenue provides the only marked crossing of Campo Street between Amador and Mountain, creating a significant barrier for neighborhood residents traveling on foot. Near-term improvements should prioritize new pedestrian crossings at Griggs and Organ Streets to reconnect Mesquite directly to the Plaza. These upgrades are well suited to implementation following the Church and Water Street conversion and would provide immediate, tangible benefits to neighborhood mobility and safety.

CONNECTIONS



SHADE AND THERMAL COMFORT

Shade is a foundational element of livability in Downtown Las Cruces' high desert climate and was one of the most consistently raised priorities during the October 2025 charrette. Community members emphasized the need for more shade not only along streets and pedestrian routes, but also within Plaza de Las Cruces, callecitas, parks, transit waiting areas, and other public gathering spaces. Expanding tree canopy, integrating shade structures, and designing buildings and streetscapes to provide relief from sun and heat are essential to making Downtown comfortable year-round. Prioritizing shade supports walkability, public health, economic activity, and social life by allowing people to linger longer, attend events, and move comfortably between destinations throughout the day and across seasons. Shade structure expansion is ongoing in 2026.



FOOD, COMFORT, AND CONNECTIONS

CALLECITAS

Several former streets now function as pedestrian-only passages, known as callecitas. These mid-block connections include portions of Court, Hadley, May, and Organ Streets and offer opportunities to be retrofitted as greener, more comfortable corridors that enhance walkability beyond Main Street.

As narrow, human-scaled connectors, callecitas support everyday movement, gathering, and neighborhood life while also accommodating stormwater management.

KEY ELEMENTS

- Pedestrian and cyclist access
- Shaded by trees or structures
- Seating and lighting
- Universal accessibility
- Support café activity to allow tables and chairs
- Murals or pavement art
- Drought-tolerant plantings with adequate soil volume
- Green infrastructure such as bioswales and permeable surfaces can further activate these spaces and improve environmental performance

SHARED SPACE CALLECITA

NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY



Architectural style is not a critical key to neighborhood identity if buildings have compatible scale, rhythm, materials, and fenestration. One of the most critical components to architectural character is the building frontage, or what occurs at the front face of the building. Storefronts, awnings, and canopies are a part of the Downtown identity, while portals, garden walls, porches, and terraces contribute to the identity of Alameda Depot and Mesquite.

GOALS



HISTORIC COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Comprehensive Plan's focus on Neighborhood Identity addresses a sense of place, and establishes policies that encourage context-sensitive development for buildings, streets, and open space. This is frequently exemplified through architecture, urban form, and public spaces. While many of the historic buildings of Downtown were lost, one goal of the Master Plan is to provide policies to promote adaptive reuse of the surviving structures. The historic street grid

is largely restored and the Plaza constructed. Many efforts have been underway since the 1990s to preserve and enhance the character of Downtown. The primary public spaces of the Plaza, Klein Park, and Pioneer Women's Park can be supplemented with courtyards, forecourts, and pocket parks. These smaller oases help reduce the urban heat island effect and leverage the regional practices of providing intimate, shaded, green spaces for dining,

relaxing, and conversation. This may be successfully achieved in a variety of historic and contemporary architectural styles, provided materials, massing, scale and fenestration are supportive of the historic identity of Downtown. Callecitas and the prevalent 300' street grid that is unique to Downtown, Alameda Depot, and Mesquite within the region are important contributors to identity. The majority of Las Cruces' land area was developed post 1940's

when suburban forms began to emerge. The areas covered by this plan plus Alameda Depot and Mesquite are the only part of the city that utilize the historic grid pattern, and the preservation of that development pattern is critical to Downtown identity.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

As a home rule municipality, Las Cruces has adopted a development framework that supports adaptive reuse through the 2025 Land

Development Code, which emphasizes flexible, mixed-use zoning and context-sensitive standards in Downtown. This approach reduces regulatory barriers to reusing existing and historic buildings by allowing a wider range of compatible uses. Adaptive reuse is further supported through the City's application of the International Existing Building Code (IEBC),

PRIVATE GREEN SPACES

The 2025 Land Development Code identifies a range of civic and semi-public spaces appropriate to the heart of the city. In addition to plazas and paseos, private courtyards remain a historic and climate-responsive architectural pattern in southern New Mexico, offering shade, refuge, and outdoor



KLEIN PARK

which maintains essential life-safety requirements while providing alternative compliance paths that recognize the constraints of older structures. Together, these tools allow buildings to be renovated and repurposed over time without requiring new-construction standards that may be impractical, helping preserve Downtown character while enabling reinvestment and productive new uses.

living space that supports residential, dining, lodging, and mixed-use. The use of native and xeric landscaping provides environmental and economic benefits. Proximity to high-quality green space has been shown to increase residential and commercial property values and support retail performance, reinforcing its importance as part of Downtown reinvestment strategies (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2022; Urban Land Institute 2018).

GOALS

With its strong block structure, proximity to neighborhood parks, and concentration of civic and employment uses, Downtown has the physical framework needed to support a highly walkable environment. Areas currently dominated by surface parking, many of which date to post-1970 redevelopment, present opportunities to improve environmental performance by introducing buildings, shade, and active uses that reduce heat gain and support pedestrian activity.

Taken together, these environmental considerations underscore the importance of integrating climate-responsive design, walkability, and water management into Downtown's reinvestment strategy. Addressing heat, shade, and stormwater at the same time strengthens Downtown's resilience while improving everyday comfort for residents, workers, and visitors.

There is a sense of urgency to capitalize on current market demand, as delayed action risks development occurring elsewhere in the city and leaving Downtown underutilized.



AREA AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT

INFILL DESIGN

Infill development Downtown should follow clear urban design principles that protect and strengthen the neighborhood identity of the city's core. While most requirements are established through the 2025 Land Development Code, several guiding concepts are central:

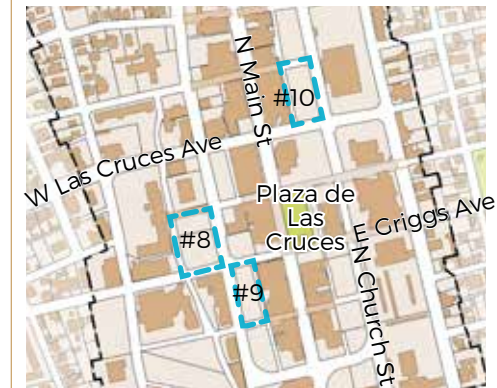
- Buildings should be oriented close to the street to define public space and support walkability, with parking located on-street or behind buildings.
- New development should include convenient bicycle parking and incorporate shade through street trees, awnings, arcades, or similar elements.
- Ground floors should feature active frontages, with transparent façades that reveal interior activity and engage the sidewalk.
- Along Amador Avenue, improved crosswalks will improve pedestrian comfort and reinforce the gateways to Downtown.
- Completing development on the block immediately south of Amador is a priority to help establish this entrance as a welcoming point of arrival.

OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Within the Actions portion of this plan, a number of catalyst sites are considered. Some of the goals of those sites are centered on utilizing the existing parking lots.

1. Parking Lots

The City owned parking lots along Church and Water are another immediate opportunity for development. The surface lots are optimal locations for housing and mixed uses within a block of the Plaza.



2. Southern Gateway

The southern edge of Downtown is characterized by an auto-oriented development pattern that does not clearly signal arrival at the city's core for motorists traveling along Amador Avenue or Lohman Avenue. Creating a stronger sense of arrival at the intersection of Amador Avenue and Main Street is essential to reinforcing Downtown's identity and encouraging passing drivers to slow, stop, and engage with the area. This location includes two of the city's most significant historic landmarks, the Amador Hotel and the former Doña Ana County Courthouse, whose restoration and adaptive reuse present a major opportunity to anchor economic activity and civic life. Design strategies that can be applied here and at other key gateways can strengthen Downtown's presence and legibility.



GOALS



LOT 8 REDEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATION



LOT 9 REDEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATION

ADDING RESIDENTS

MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

Downtown housing demand is documented in the 2021 market analysis and reinforced through decades of planning efforts, beginning with the R/UDAT study and continuing through every major Downtown plan since. Adding residents Downtown is essential to sustaining local businesses, supporting restaurants and services, strengthening transit viability, and extending activity beyond office



HALF BLOCK WITH PARKING LOT ≈ 50 UNITS PER ACRE

hours. Concentrating new housing near jobs, civic institutions, and daily services is a foundational strategy for Downtown economic vitality.

Downtown offers multiple opportunities to add housing on underutilized and City-owned sites, including surface parking lots. While housing

is addressed here under Community Prosperity, how housing is designed and integrated is equally important to maintaining Downtown's neighborhood identity. When done well, Downtown housing advances multiple citywide objectives: supporting local businesses and employment, enabling walkable access to daily needs, and directing growth inward in a compact, efficient pattern that reduces infrastructure costs and outward land consumption.

Larger buildings that extend across long block lengths should be carefully massed and articulated to avoid monolithic forms. Variation in building height, setbacks, and façade rhythm helps maintain neighborhood identity. These principles apply equally to residential, commercial, and institutional development and are further addressed in Architecture, p. 46. Parking management will become increasingly important as surface lots



HALF BLOCK WITH PARKING GARAGE ≈ 70 UNITS PER ACRE

redevelop. While studies indicate a Downtown parking surplus, shared parking strategies and public-private partnerships will be necessary as housing is added. Well-designed parking should be accessed from alleys or secondary streets and lined with active uses wherever possible, ensuring that sidewalks and streets remain engaging, comfortable, and lively for people rather than dominated by vehicles.

GOALS

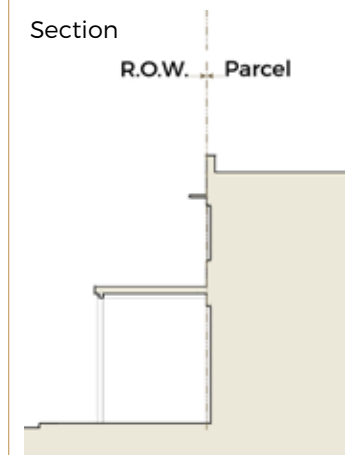
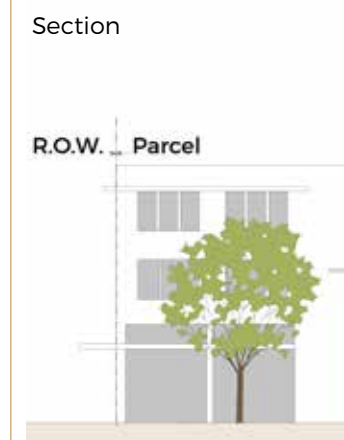
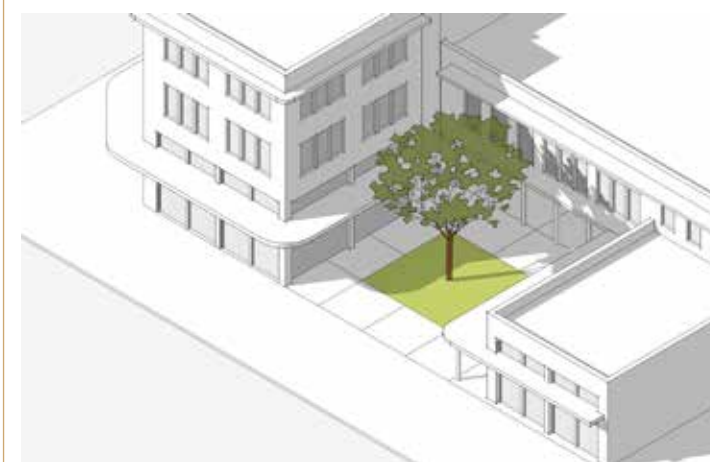
Architecture

KEY COMPONENTS

Architecture plays a critical role in the promotion of **NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY**. While this plan does not establish policy concerning style, the massing of the building and how it faces the sidewalk are critical components of authenticity. How the building meets the sidewalk is regulated by the 2025 Land Development Code.

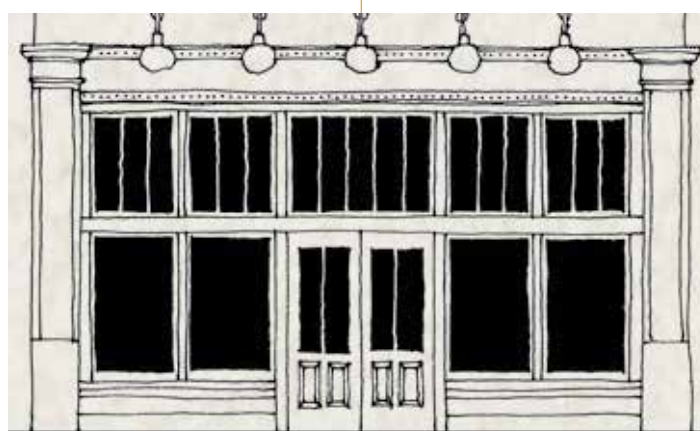


FORECOURT
Courtyard spaces are a part of the Downtown identity, and forecourts provide enclosure while engaging the sidewalk. These spaces are perfect for gardens, outdoor dining, or providing an entry to multiple shops or residences.



GALLERY
Shade is critical to walkability in the high desert environment. Galleries shade the sidewalk and encourage the pedestrian to walk closer to the shopfront.

MASSING
The images above illustrate the fact that style isn't critical to neighborhood identity if building massing is broken up to provide pedestrian scale and diversity. Variety in height and setbacks provide outdoor spaces as well.



SHOPFRONT
Some Main Street shopfronts suffer from tinted or reflective glazing. This prohibits shoppers from seeing the merchandise. Shopfronts should have at least 50% clear glass between 2 and 8 feet above the sidewalk to enhance retail success.

COMMON ENTRY
The common entry type is used for multi-family, office or institutional uses. It may be lined with a planter and has 30% clear glass between 2 and 8 feet above grade along the street.



GOALS



Economic prosperity in Downtown Las Cruces depends on how existing assets are **connected, coordinated, and communicated.**

PROSPERITY THROUGH CONNECTION



MAIN STREET NIGHTLIFE



PLAZA

Economic development is not solely about recruitment, but about creating conditions in which local businesses can thrive, new enterprises can emerge, and employers of varying scales can grow. The economic priority is to strengthen these conditions by supporting business vitality, workforce opportunity, and a development environment that aligns with long-term resilience and local values. Downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods provide Las Cruces'

strongest platform for this kind of prosperity. Compact, walkable environments have become increasingly important to employers seeking to attract and retain talent, particularly in knowledge-based, creative, professional, and service sectors. National research shows that businesses are choosing walkable downtown locations to support workforce recruitment, collaboration, brand identity, and operational efficiency, while also reducing transportation

costs and supporting quality-of-life goals for employees (Smart Growth America 2019). Clean, safe streets, adaptable buildings, and active public spaces are now baseline expectations for competitive urban employment districts.

WALK TO WORK

Downtown, Mesquite, and Alameda Depot are the most walkable areas of Las Cruces and are well positioned to leverage the growing connection between walkability and

job growth. Studies consistently demonstrate that employment growth in walkable urban places continues to outperform more auto-dependent areas, as companies relocate, consolidate, or expand into environments with higher Walk Scores and access to amenities (Cortright 2015). These locations appeal to workers who value shorter commutes, transportation choice, and proximity to housing, services, and culture.

Adaptive reuse and infill development are central to this shift. Repurposed historic buildings and flexible office spaces support entrepreneurship, creative industries, and small businesses while reinforcing neighborhood identity. Downtown Las Cruces already possesses many of these assets, and continued investment in streets, public safety, and amenities strengthens its

ability to compete for jobs that align with the city's workforce and economic aspirations. choosing urban living (Sustainable Prosperity 2013). In addition, recent national surveys indicate that a strong majority of Americans place high value on being within easy walking distance of neighborhood destinations, reinforcing demand for compact, mixed-use development (National Association of Realtors 2023). This Master Plan Update supports prosper-

ability to compete for jobs that align with the city's workforce and economic aspirations.

LIVE DOWNTOWN

National demographic trends show that both younger adults and older households increasingly prefer walkable neighborhoods where daily needs are close to home and work. Across North America, downtown residents consistently cite proximity to employment and services as primary reasons for

by promoting balanced Downtown development that integrates housing, employment, services, and culture within a walkable framework. By coordinating investment across transportation, housing, public space, and economic development, Downtown Las Cruces can continue to grow as a place where people choose to live, work, and invest, strengthening both the local economy and overall community well-being.

GOALS



RETAIL PERCEPTION

Retail performance in downtowns is shaped as much by perception as by purchasing power. Middle-income urban districts are often underestimated by retailers, despite the fact that compact, walkable areas frequently generate higher spending per acre than suburban centers due to density and repeat visits. Clear zoning, predictable standards, and visible public investment help counter outdated assumptions and signal that Downtown is a place where businesses can succeed.

Walkable Retail. Walkability is foundational to downtown retail success. Retailers consistently evaluate pedestrian comfort, visibility, and ease of access when considering locations. While Downtown Las Cruces already benefits from a strong street grid and compact blocks, continued improvements to shade, crossings, lighting, and sidewalk quality are essential to convert foot traffic into retail activity.

The Mix. Successful downtowns focus first on serving local needs. A healthy retail mix includes neighborhood-serving goods, food and beverage, services, and cultural uses. Locally owned businesses are particularly important in establishing Downtown’s identity and resilience.

Rising Tide. Retail does not operate in isolation. Hotels, universities, and employers increasingly seek locations where guests, students, and workers can walk to shops, restaurants, and cultural amenities. Strengthening Downtown retail supports broader economic goals by reinforcing Downtown as a place to live, stay, study, and work.

Show the Goods. Retail is visual. Transparent storefronts, clear views into shops, and active displays allow pedestrians to quickly understand what is being offered. Windows, doors, and lighting should work together to communicate openness and activity, making storefronts readable at a glance.

Keep it Clean. Simple, well-maintained streets and sidewalks matter more than expensive materials. Clean pavement, well-kept landscaping, and uncluttered public spaces allow storefronts to stand out and reinforce a sense of care and safety that encourages people to linger and return.

Timing and Activity. Today’s shoppers value efficiency and experience. Downtown retail and dining must be supported by hours, programming, and lighting that respond to evening and weekend activity, when much of downtown commerce now occurs.

Parking and Access. Retail success depends on clear, convenient access. Employee and long-term parking should be managed to preserve short-term parking for customers. Clear wayfinding and shared parking strategies are often more effective than simply increasing supply.

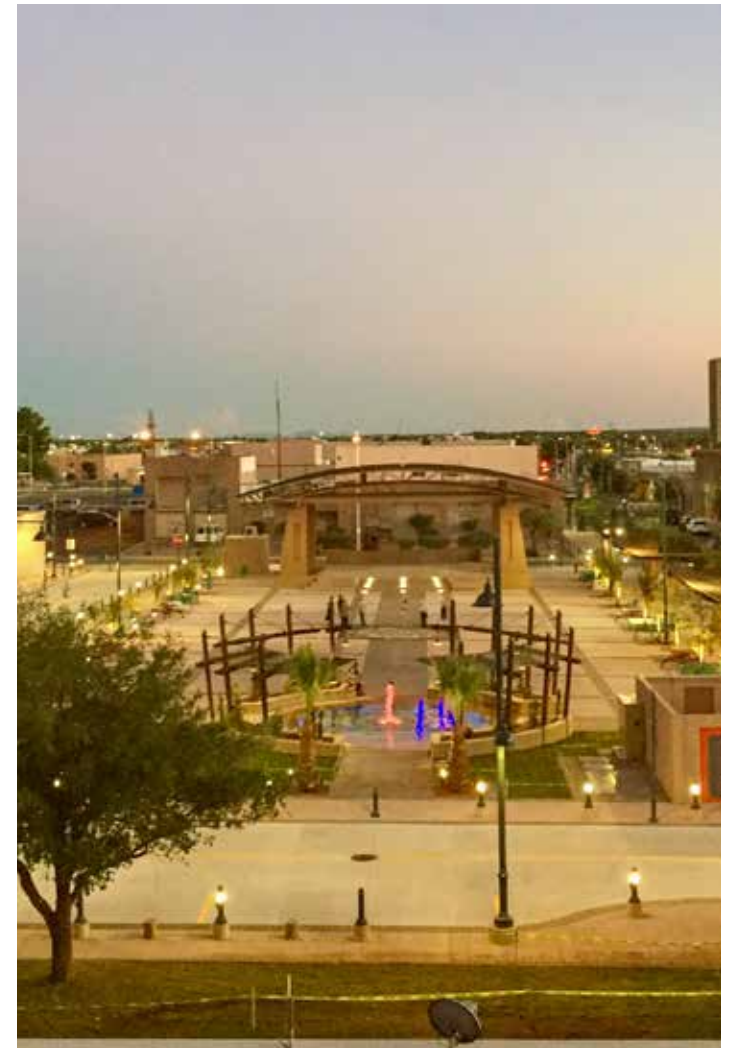
Signage. Downtown signage should be varied, legible, and well crafted, including projecting signs, wall-mounted signs, and temporary sidewalk signs where appropriate. Consistent standards and predictable enforcement encourage higher-quality investment and reinforce Downtown’s neighborhood identity. Signage is regulated through the 2025 Land Development Code.

GOALS



Sustainable growth strengthens community resilience when land use regulations, development policy, and public investment are aligned.

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



In Downtown Las Cruces, reinforcing a compact, mixed-use development pattern supports walkability, efficient infrastructure use, and long-term neighborhood stability. This Master Plan update builds on the 2020 Comprehensive Plan by translating its sustainability policies into context-sensitive development approaches tailored to Downtown and its adjacent historic neighborhoods.

2025 LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

The recently adopted 2025 Land Development Code provides a flexible yet predictable framework to guide Downtown growth. The code supports sustainable outcomes by:

- Allowing development flexibility while providing clarity and certainty for adjacent property owners.

- Encouraging a mix of residential, commercial, civic, and cultural uses within a compact, walkable urban form.
- Supporting transitions between Downtown and the Mesquite and Alameda Depot historic neighborhoods.
- Reinforcing historic patterns, building forms, and neighborhood identity rather than imposing uniform design solutions.

PLANNING AREAS

Downtown, Mesquite, and Alameda Depot each possess a well-established neighborhood identity that does not require reinvention. Instead, future policy and investment should focus on protecting and strengthening this identity, improving infrastructure, and reinforcing clear gateways that signal arrival into Downtown. While existing overlay districts provide

tools for context-sensitive development, additional implementation mechanisms may be needed to support reinvestment and infrastructure upgrades. One such tool is the potential use of a Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) plan to enable targeted Tax Increment Development District (TIDD) funding in Mesquite and Alameda Depot. Neighborhood scale TIDDs support

public infrastructure and improvements by capturing incremental property tax growth within a defined area. These revenues may be used to finance bonds for public projects, helping reduce barriers to private reinvestment while maintaining a clear distinction between public funding for public improvements and private responsibility for private development.



Main Street teems with culture

IV. ACTIONS

GOALS TO ACTIONS

THIS CHAPTER'S FOCUS IS ON SIX CATALYST PROJECTS, THE DEVELOPMENTS THE CITY CAN ADVANCE WITH MRA AND TIDD SUPPORT TO UNLOCK MOMENTUM DOWNTOWN, ONE SITE AT A TIME, ONE BLOCK AT A TIME, ONE STREET AT A TIME. THE IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX TRACKS THOSE MOVES, SO PROGRESS IS VISIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE.

The actions start with catalyst projects because catalysts are commitments, not concepts. Each one is a development with a site, and a path to realization, backed by public tools that make private investment pencil. Begin here, then align public infrastructure, mobility, housing, business support, preservation, and culture around the places where shovels will move first. This chapter concludes with an implementation matrix. This is the working map from goals to delivery, showing what has been achieved, what is ongoing, and what is still ahead.



CATALYST 1: LOT 8 | N. WATER ST. AT W. GRIGGS AVE.

CATALYST 2: LOT 9 | N. WATER ST. AT GRIGGS & MAY



CATALYST 3: PLAZA AT E. ORGAN AVENUE

CATALYST 4: W. GRIGGS AVE. AT ALAMEDA BLVD.



CATALYST 5: LAS CRUCES AVE. AT CAMPO ST.

CATALYST 6: N. MAIN ST. GROCERY OR MUNICIPAL USE

Plans change minds only when projects take shape on the ground. Catalyst projects do exactly that, turning policy into visible progress that residents, investors, and visitors can feel. The question is simple: where should the first dollars land to trigger the most private follow on investment?

Catalysts in this plan are developments that the City can advance with MRA and TIDD support. They concentrate attention, funding, and staff time where a site and a path to realization already exist. Early focus is placed on two opportunity types that fit downtown's fabric and current market: city parking lots can be developed with housing and mixed use, and the east side of the Plaza infilled with multi story mixed use. By leading with these sites, the plan sets location, sequence, and pace for related work in the public realm, then aligns other actions to support delivery. The other four catalyst sites may be longer to redevelop, but are used to illustrate the goals of this plan.

CATALYST PROJECTS
SPARK CHANGE



CATALYST 1: LOT 8 | N. WATER ST. AT W. GRIGGS AVE.



CATALYST 2: LOT 9 | N. WATER ST. AT GRIGGS & MAY



CATALYST 3: PLAZA AT E. ORGAN AVENUE



CATALYST 4: W. GRIGGS AVE. AT ALAMEDA BLVD.



CATALYST 5: LAS CRUCES AVE. AT CAMPO ST.



CATALYST 6: N. MAIN ST. GROCERY OR MUNICIPAL USE

These catalyst plans show how the goals and policies of this master plan can take physical form on real sites. Together, they demonstrate how targeted public investment and coordinated development can reinforce Downtown's structure, support everyday life, and build momentum one block and one project at a time. Here's how the catalyst sites help realize the top three priorities of this plan (see I. Overview, p. 9):

Connected. The catalyst sites are located along key streets that structure movement through Downtown and link it to the Mesquite and Alameda Depot neighborhoods, including Griggs Avenue, Las Cruces Avenue, May Avenue, and North Main Street. These streets are not treated simply as conduits, but as civic connectors that frame views, support safe crossings, and make walking between neighborhoods and Downtown intuitive and welcoming. By concentrating early projects along these corridors, the plan prioritizes repairing gaps in connectivity, strengthening east-west movement, and reinforcing Downtown as a place that is easy to reach and move through without relying on a car.

Inhabited. Each site plan illustrates ways to add people to Downtown through housing and mixed-use development that responds to its context. While the specific building types vary, the common thread is flexibility: adaptable spaces that can evolve over time and development patterns that support daily needs alongside places to live. Several of the site plans also illustrate how larger parcels can be subdivided or phased, creating smaller development sites that lower barriers to entry, ease financing, and expand opportunities for local and incremental developers. Together, the sites demonstrate how adding residents near schools, services, jobs, and public spaces can support a fuller Downtown life: one that works for families, students, workers, elders, and newcomers, and that strengthens local businesses by creating steady, everyday activity beyond special events.

Livable. The site plans emphasize the shaping of streets and open spaces as much as the buildings themselves. Structures are placed to define courtyards, edges, and sidewalks, creating a sequence of outdoor rooms that support neighborhood identity and social life. Street trees, shaded walkways, and green infrastructure are integrated to address heat and manage stormwater, particularly during monsoon seasons. These moves show how redevelopment can improve comfort, safety, and beauty at the same time, turning streets, plazas, and shared spaces into places where people linger, gather, and return, and where everyday moments contribute to a Downtown that feels welcoming, active, and alive throughout the year.



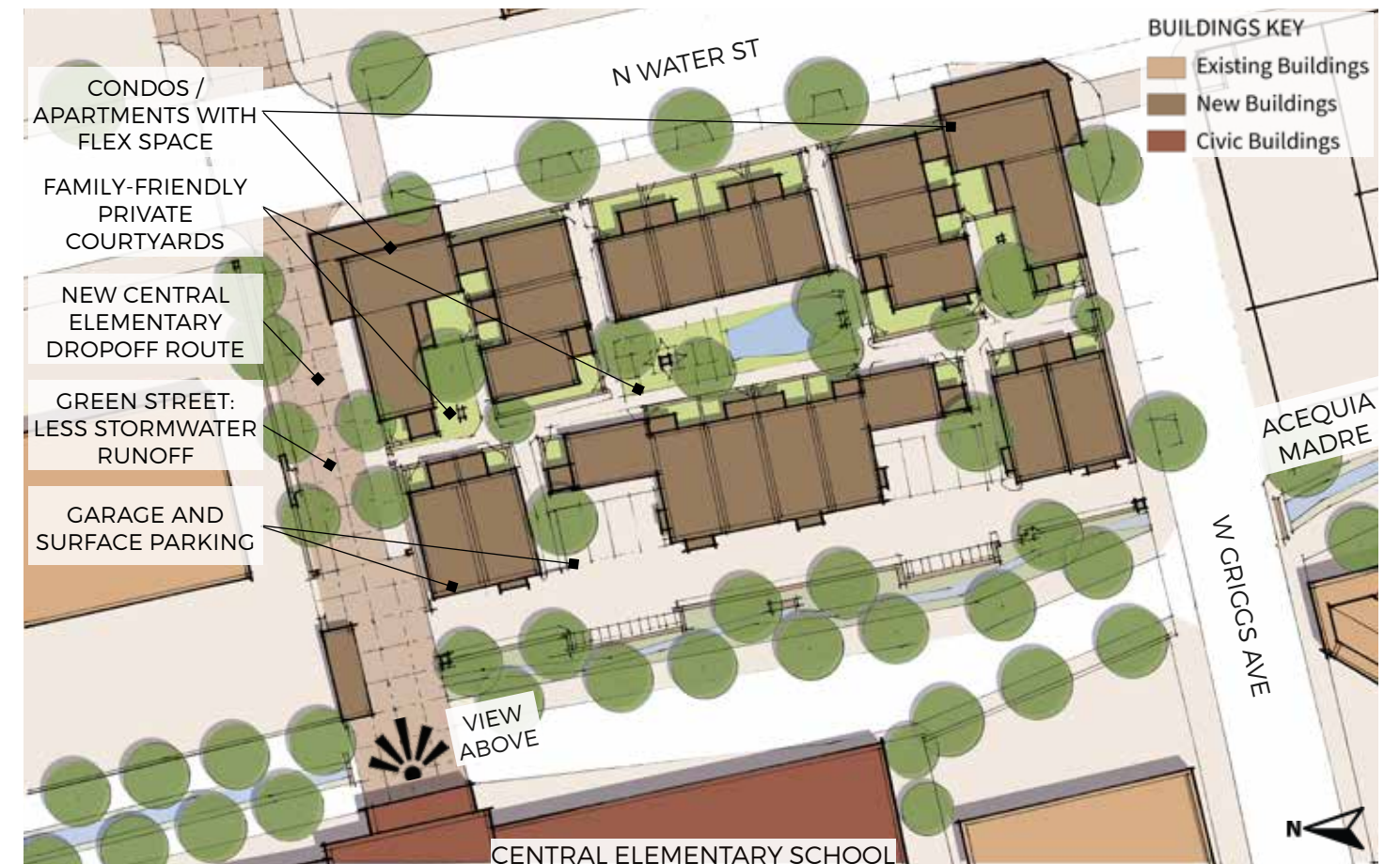
CURRENT CONDITIONS



**CATALYST 1: PARKING LOT 8
NORTH WATER STREET AT
WEST GRIGGS AVENUE**

What if a surface lot became a family address?

This site at North Water Street and West Griggs Avenue sits beside Central Elementary, which makes it especially desirable for households who want a short walk to school. A newly designed drop off route, eliminates pedestrian-vehicle conflicts, and improves safety for children. Buildings are arranged in a compound layout that frames a quiet, private court where parents can watch from stoops, children can play, and neighbors can gather. The court ties into the Organ Callecita, continued here as a shared space with pervious paving and green infrastructure that manages seasonal flooding rather than pushing it into Central Elementary. Green street elements stitch the block to Water Street and the Acequia Madre. Flexible ground floor space supports small services or work from home. The result replaces asphalt with homes, safety, and a calm center for everyday life, one block that helps downtown feel lived in.



CATALYST 1: PARKING LOT 8 | N. WATER ST. AT W. GRIGGS AVE. | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 1: PARKING LOT 8 | N. WATER ST. AT W. GRIGGS AVE. | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

CENTRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL





CATALYST 1: PARKING LOT 8 | N. WATER ST. AT W. GRIGGS AVE. | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CURRENT CONDITIONS



**CATALYST 2: PARKING LOT 9
NORTH WATER STREET BETWEEN GRIGGS & MAY**

Steps from the Plaza and Main Street, Parking Lot 9 can also trade asphalt for housing.

Medium density apartments pair with flexible ground floor space suited to a corner cafe, studio, or small retailer, giving daily reasons to walk. Along North Water Street, new bulb outs add street trees that create shade without shifting curbs, improving comfort on the block. West May's callecita continues as the neighborhood connector, linking Main Street businesses to a newly designed Parking Lot 10. It can be converted into a parking plaza with trees and pervious paving for stormwater uptake. Roof terraces on May capture views of the Organ Mountains, a reminder that everyday life Downtown can hold real spectacle. The result is a compact, mixed use cluster that keeps people near the Plaza, adds green relief on Water Street, and improves a practical parking solution that supports nearby shops and homes.



ELEVATION ALONG NORTH WATER STREET; ARCHITECTURAL STYLE MAY VARY



CATALYST 2: LOT 9 | N. WATER ST. BETWEEN GRIGGS & MAY | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 2: LOT 9 | N. WATER ST. BETWEEN GRIGGS & MAY | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 2: LOT 9 | N. WATER ST. BETWEEN GRIGGS & MAY | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



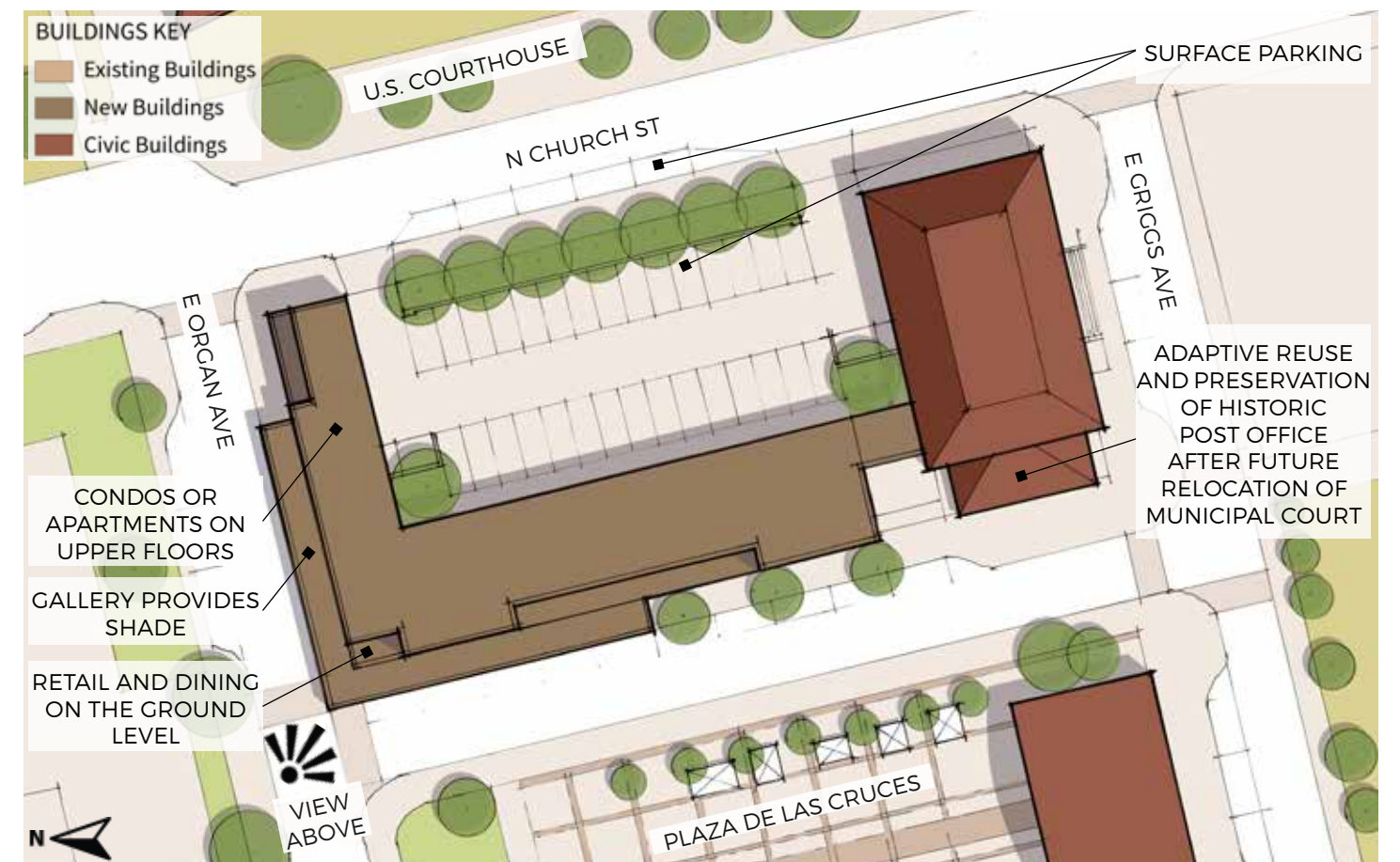
CURRENT CONDITIONS



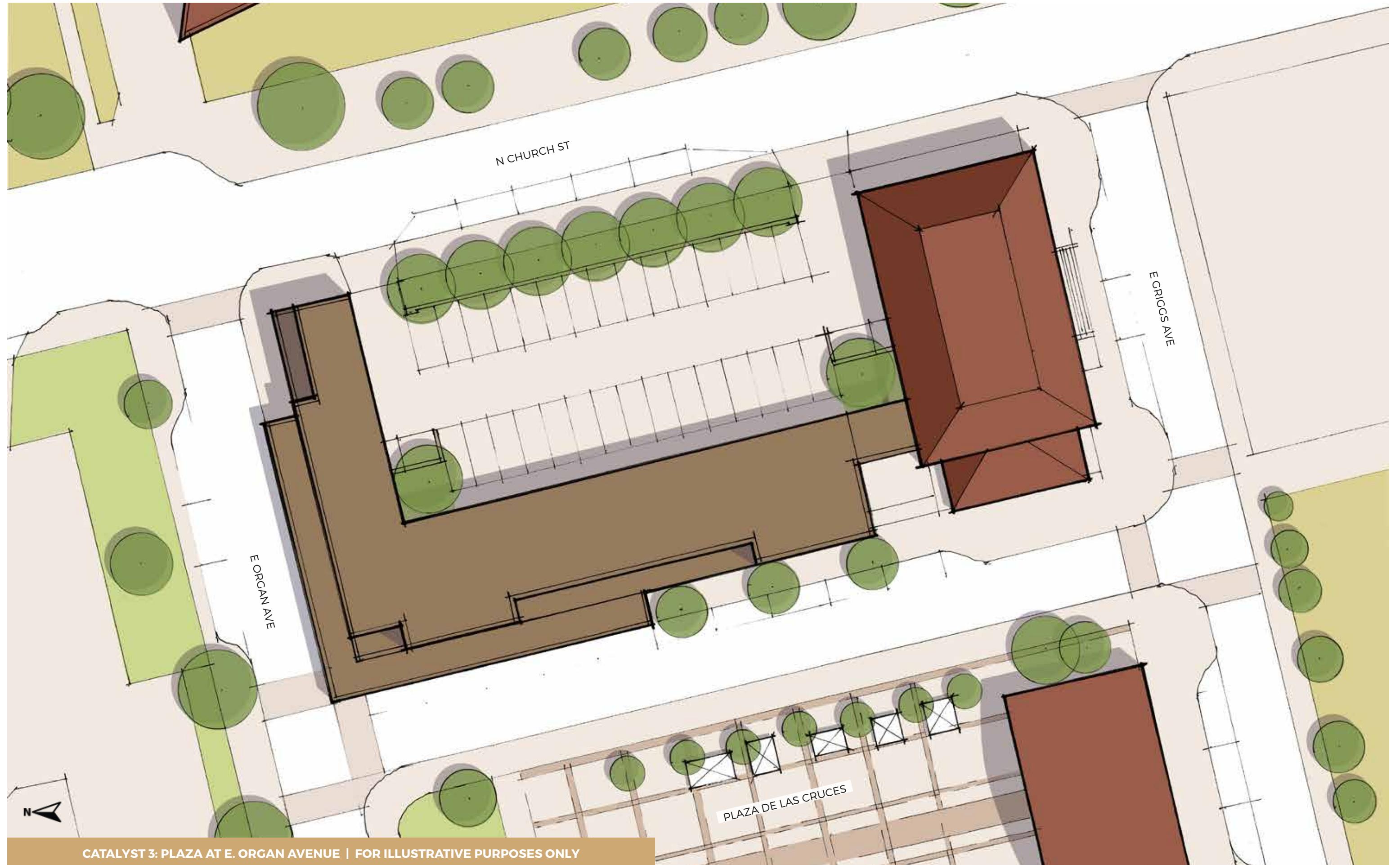
**CATALYST 3:
PLAZA AT E. ORGAN AVENUE**

What completes the Plaza's urban room?

Finishing the east side with a mixed-use building that brings life to the ground floor and homes above. The concept preserves and reuses the historic post office after the municipal court relocates to another updated downtown home, while replacing the one story addition with a new infill building. Retail and dining line the plaza under a shaded gallery, with condominiums or apartments on the upper floors to keep lights on after dusk. Scale and density are intentionally right sized so a surface lot can serve the block rather than a costly parking structure. Along South Church Street, added shade trees and new on-street parking improve comfort, calm traffic, and provide convenient access to Main Street shops, events, and the Plaza. Together, these moves frame the public space, honor a landmark building, and create an address at E. Organ Avenue where daily errands, lunch crowds, and evening events feel right at home.



CATALYST 3: PLAZA AT E. ORGAN AVENUE | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 3: PLAZA AT E. ORGAN AVENUE | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 3: PLAZA AT E. ORGAN AVENUE | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CURRENT CONDITIONS



**CATALYST 4:
W. GRIGGS AVE. AT ALAMEDA BLVD.**

A successful neighborhood transition invites people to live nearby, not just pass through.

This empty corner parking lot is privately owned and not available for sale at this time, but this sample illustration is a good example of how townhouse infill could step down in scale as a transition to the Alameda Depot neighborhood, reflecting historic setbacks, portals, and massing so the new homes read as good neighbors. Along Griggs, a new bike lane calms traffic and offers a predictable route to and from downtown. New street trees in curb bulb outs add shade, shorten crossings, and improve comfort for people walking and biking. Garden walls and small dooryards provide privacy without turning away from the street, while a shared drive keeps garages and guest parking tucked away in the rear. A small shared courtyard gives residents a place to gather. Together, these moves could create a green, low speed threshold that is residential in character, connects safely to downtown destinations, and strengthens the daily ties between Alameda Depot and the heart of the city.



This street section shows a possible condition in the middle of the block and shows how left-turn lanes could be eliminated at secondary street intersections. Low landscaped planters at secondary intersections only.

ALAMEDA BLVD STREETScape POSSIBILITY



CATALYST 4: W. GRIGGS AVE. AT ALAMEDA BLVD. | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 4: W. GRIGGS AVE. AT ALAMEDA BLVD. | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 4: W. GRIGGS AVE. AT ALAMEDA BLVD. | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 5: LAS CRUCES AT CAMPO

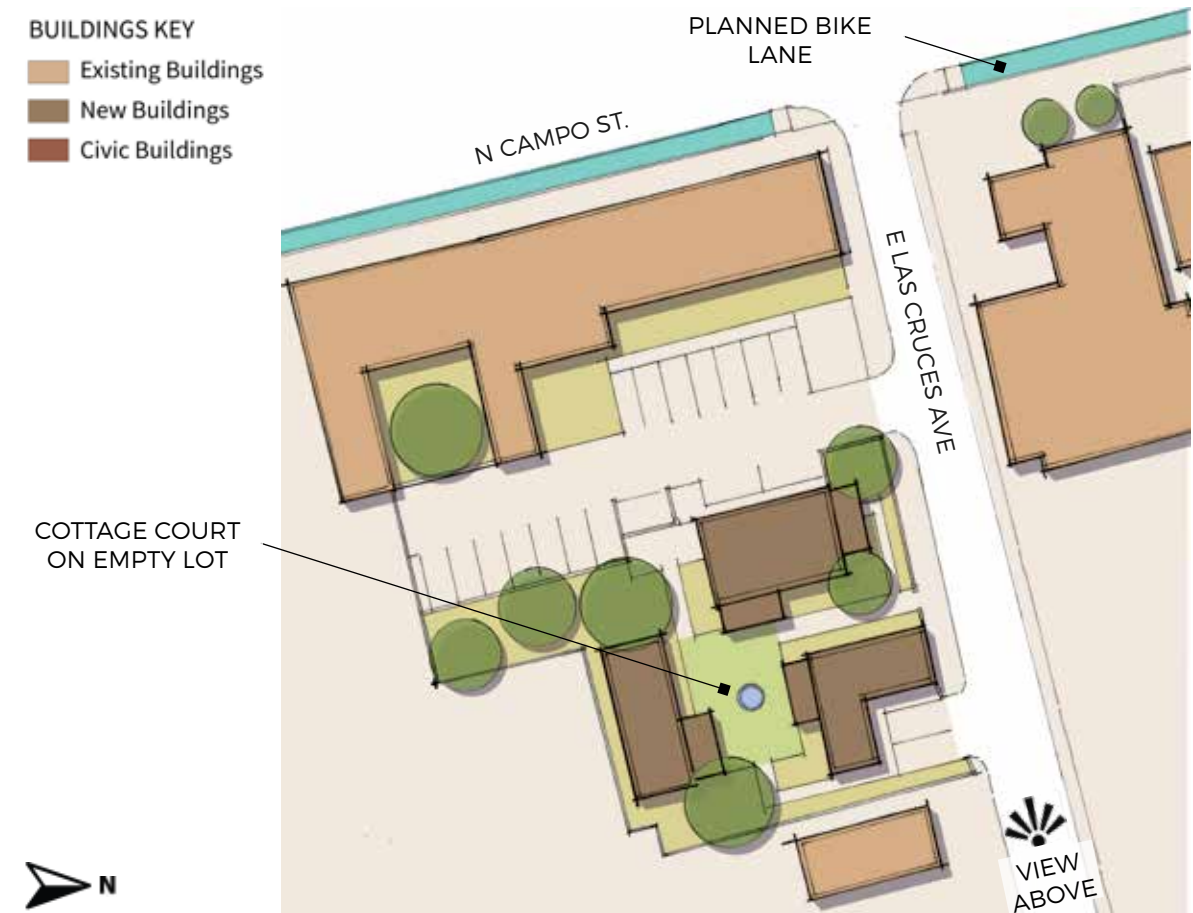
A quiet seam between downtown and Mesquite gains a small cluster of cottages that smooth the transition.

The concept introduces a cottage court infill on the empty lot, stepping down in scale to form a gentle transition into the Mesquite neighborhood. Building placement follows the historic pattern, matching setbacks, dooryards, and simple one to two story massing so the new reads as part of the context. Shared parking is tucked on site to serve residents and adjacent commercial uses on N. Campo, easing curb pressure while keeping storefront access convenient. Klein Park sits a short block walk away, offering daily green space. Together, these moves add gentle density, respect neighborhood character, and support nearby businesses with practical parking and comfortable access.



COTTAGE COURT INSPIRATION

- BUILDINGS KEY**
- Existing Buildings
 - New Buildings
 - Civic Buildings



CATALYST 5: LAS CRUCES AT CAMPO | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 5: LAS CRUCES AVENUE AT CAMPO STREETV | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CURRENT CONDITIONS

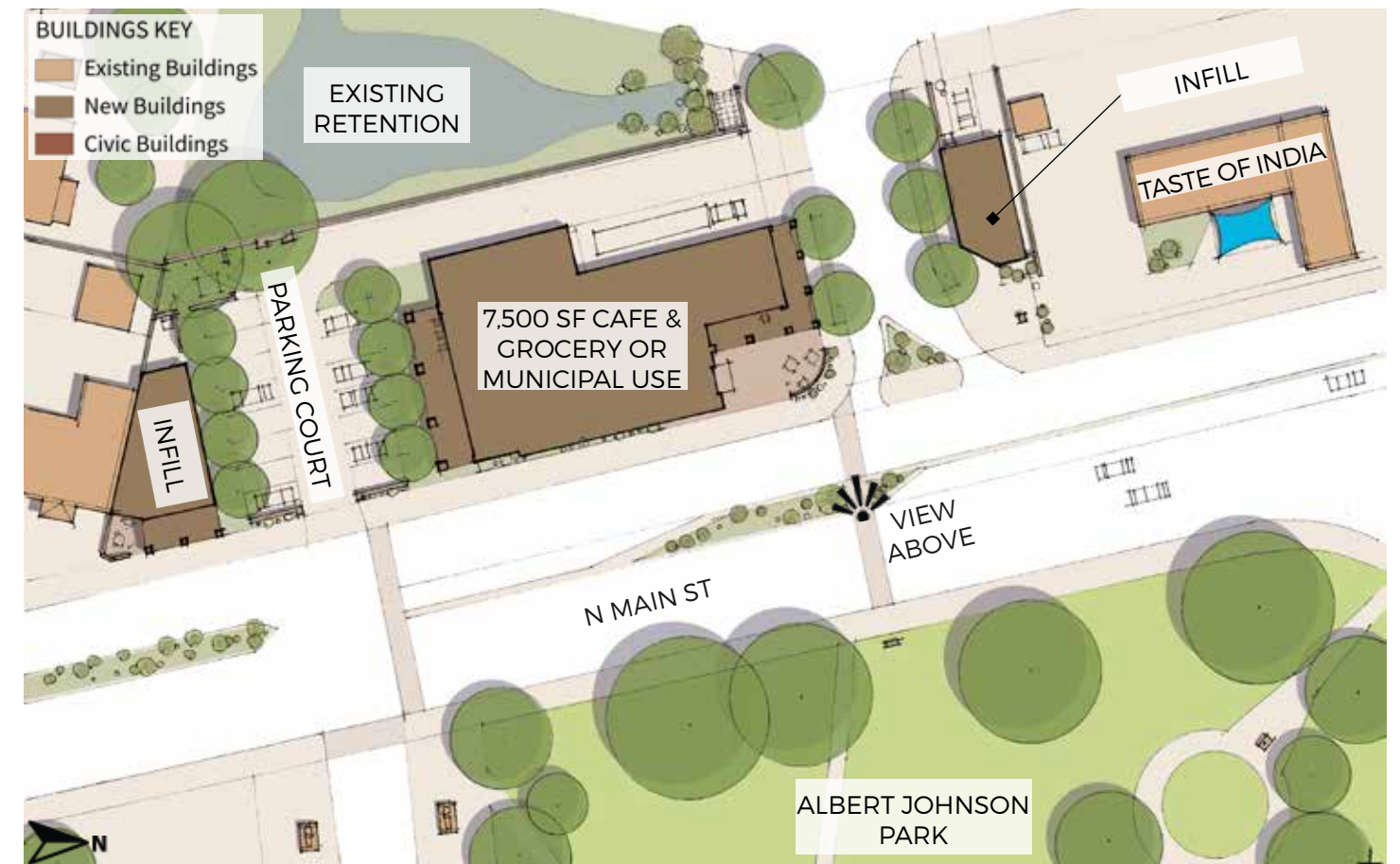


**CATALYST 6:
NORTH MAIN STREET**

Redevelopment of the existing Shook Tire building along North Main Street, after environmental assessment is complete, offers a number of options. A neighborhood-scale grocery meets community need while reinforcing Downtown’s role as an everyday place to live. Or municipal uses benefit from proximity to City Hall. A grocery anchors food access within walking distance of Mesquite, Alameda Depot, and the neighborhoods north of Picacho Avenue, reducing the need for car trips while supporting local health and resilience. Visibility to the traffic on Picacho supports financial success. A modest, flexible format grocery can adapt over time, pairing fresh food with opportunities for local and regional producers. Its location along a primary gateway into Downtown allows the building to signal arrival while activating the street with transparent storefronts, shade, and safe pedestrian access. As a catalyst, the site strengthens surrounding housing and mixed-use development by providing a daily necessity, supports local economic circulation, and helps establish North Main as a lived-in corridor that connects neighborhoods to Downtown life. Just east of Main Street, the Albert Johnson Park provides a connection to the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library and the Las Cruces City Hall.



GROCER INSPIRATION ON THIS OR OTHER SITES



CATALYST 6: NORTH MAIN STREET GROCERY OR MUNICIPAL USE | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 6: NORTH MAIN STREET GROCERY OR MUNICIPAL USE | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



CATALYST 6: NORTH MAIN STREET GROCERY OR MUNICIPAL USE | FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY



The catalyst projects illustrate how the Downtown Master Plan’s priorities and goals can take physical form on specific, highly visible sites. Each catalyst represents a near-term opportunity where coordinated public investment can unlock private development, demonstrate desired patterns, and build momentum one block at a time. Together, they show how Downtown can grow in ways that are connected to surrounding neighborhoods, supportive of daily life, and rooted in place.

However, Downtown’s success does not depend on a handful of sites alone. The catalyst projects are supported and made viable by a broader set of actions that apply across Downtown as a whole. These actions address the systems, policies, and public investments that shape everyday experience and long-term outcomes, regardless of parcel boundaries or individual development timing.

The following sections outline coordinated actions in six focus areas:

- Public Infrastructure
- Connectivity
- Housing Development
- Business & Economic Development
- Historic Preservation
- Arts, Culture, & Programming

Together, these actions translate the plan’s goals into downtown strategies that improve comfort, access, opportunity, and identity. While less site-specific than the catalyst projects, they are equally critical to implementation, ensuring that Downtown evolves as a cohesive, resilient, and livable district over time.

Downtown actions align Downtown plan implementation with the 2020 Comprehensive Plan by translating citywide policy into coordinated, place-based strategies. They advance Community Environment, Community Prosperity, and Community Livability goals by ensuring that infrastructure, development, preservation, and programming work together to support a healthy, connected, and economically resilient Downtown.

These actions provide the framework within which catalyst projects can succeed, future opportunities can emerge, and incremental investment—by the City, local partners, and private developers—can align with a shared vision for Downtown Las Cruces.

DOWNTOWN ACTIONS
SPARK CHANGE



1. PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

What turns public space into a daily routine? Comfort, safety, and the basics, delivered where people actually walk. This section commits to shade that cools sidewalks and public spaces, lighting that invites evenings, and public amenities that make a quick trip downtown easy. Actions should be packaged by streets and timed to catalysts, so work lands where development is moving. The goal is simple: make downtown enjoyable every day and welcoming at night, so private reinvestment follows.



SHADE AND COOLING

Outcome: Cooler, walkable streets and public spaces to linger in.

Core Actions

Action 1.1 Plant native or well-adapted street trees with sufficient soil volume and rooting space to support long-term canopy growth, prioritizing Las Cruces, Organ, and Griggs in the near-term.

Action 1.2 Install shade structures or architectural shade elements where trees are not feasible, including within Plaza de Las Cruces, along key sidewalks, and at transit stops.

Action 1.3 Expand green infrastructure where feasible, including bioswales, permeable paving, and landscape-based stormwater features that reduce heat, manage runoff, and improve microclimate performance.

Action 1.4 Coordinate shade placement with seating, gathering areas, and pedestrian routes to ensure shade is usable throughout the day and across seasons, not limited to isolated locations.

Success indicators: More continuous shade on priority links. Fewer hot spots after noon. Standing water is reduced after storms.



LIGHTING AND SAFETY

Outcome: Streets and public spaces that feel safe after dark.

Core Actions

Action 1.5 Install pedestrian-scale lighting on side streets, alleys, parking areas, and in parks to improve visibility, support evening activity, and address safety concerns without creating glare or over-lighting.

Action 1.6 Upgrade lighting within the Plaza and along callecitas to support nighttime use, small events, and informal gathering while maintaining clear sightlines.

Action 1.7 Ensure transit stops and waiting areas are well lit, with lighting that supports visibility of approaching vehicles, surrounding sidewalks, and adjacent uses.

Action 1.8 Prioritize consistent lighting maintenance and replacement schedules so improvements remain effective over time.

Success indicators: Higher evening foot traffic on affected blocks. Fewer dark gaps between destinations.

PUBLIC SPACES

Outcome: Places people use every day to move, meet, and play.

Action 1.9 Strengthen connections between parks, trails, and civic spaces by improving wayfinding, surface conditions, and visual continuity between Klein Memorial Park, Pioneer Women's Park, the Plaza, and surrounding streets.

Action 1.10 Add durable public seating, landscaping, and public art along streets and within the Plaza to support informal gathering, rest, and social interaction throughout the day.

Action 1.11 Assure public restrooms have twenty-four-hour access, and are designed for durability, safety, and ease of maintenance.

Action 1.12 Install drinking fountains, dog waste stations, trash and recycling receptacles, and vendor power outlets in Plaza locations that support daily use and events without cluttering primary pedestrian routes.

Action 1.13 Replace hostile or exclusionary design elements with welcoming benches, edges, and seating that accommodate a range of ages and abilities.

Action 1.14 Introduce simple play or game elements within callecitas and secondary spaces to encourage everyday activation beyond scheduled programming.

Success indicators: Restroom uptime and cleanliness. Reduced litter. Longer Plaza dwell times on market & non-market days.



2. CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity underpins daily life downtown. This section commits to protected bike routes, wider accessible sidewalks, safer crossings, and clear links between the adjacent neighborhoods and Main Street. Priority moves address persistent gaps on Lohman and Amador, refine signal timing for people on foot, and extend a park to park greenbelt that ties Klein Park, Pioneer Women’s Park, and regional trails. Quick wins proceed in parallel, from wayfinding at downtown entries and public parking to curb management that keeps deliveries orderly. The aim is practical: shorten trips, calm speeds, and make each block feel reachable without a car, so residents choose downtown for everyday errands and evenings alike.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE SAFETY

Outcome: Safer crossings and comfortable routes.

Core Actions

Action 2.1 Install High Intensity Activated Crosswalk beacons at the following priority locations to improve pedestrian visibility and right of way compliance on arterial streets:

- Griggs Avenue at Alameda Boulevard
- Las Cruces Avenue at Alameda Boulevard
- Griggs Avenue at Campo Street
- Las Cruces Avenue at Campo Street



Action 2.2 Study and pilot raised crosswalks at these same locations, subject to drainage, emergency response, and freight considerations, to reinforce pedestrian priority, slow vehicle speeds at intersections, and improve accessibility.

Action 2.3 Maintain high visibility longitudinal bars at all marked crosswalks outside of Main Street through a scheduled repainting and inspection program to ensure markings remain visible year round, particularly after monsoon season.

Action 2.4 Construct protected bicycle facilities on priority corridors using vertical separation such as curbs, concrete buffers, or hardened bollards rather than paint only treatments, focusing first on routes that connect

Downtown to Mesquite, Alameda Depot, and regional trails.

Action 2.5 Widen sidewalks beyond Main Street where right of way allows, with consistent clear zones that meet ADA standards and accommodate shade, lighting, and street furnishings without obstructing pedestrian movement.

Action 2.6 Improve signal timing for pedestrians at key crossings by lengthening walk intervals, reducing wait times, and prioritizing pedestrian phases in areas with high foot traffic.

Action 2.7 Follow city speed management practices on Lohman Avenue and Amador Avenue including:

- Lane re-striping or lane

narrowing within existing curb lines where feasible

- Enhanced pavement markings and gateway treatments signaling entry into a pedestrian-oriented downtown environment

- Advance pedestrian warning signage and high-visibility crosswalk markings at key intersections

- Speed feedback signs and targeted speed enforcement zones

Success indicators: Lower 85th percentile speeds. More bike and pedestrian counts at peak hours. Fewer near-miss reports at key crossings.

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS

Outcome: Stronger links between Mesquite, Downtown, Alameda Depot, and nearby parks.

Core Actions

Action 2.8 Improve Organ, Las Cruces, and Griggs streetscapes as pedestrian priority connectors linking Downtown with Mesquite and Alameda Depot, with shade, lighting, bicycle facilities, and traffic calming appropriate to neighborhood context.

Action 2.9 Separate pedestrian signal phases from left turn movements at Alameda Boulevard crossings, particularly at Organ, Las Cruces, and Griggs, to reduce conflict points and improve safety for people walking.

Action 2.10 Address drag racing through design and enforcement working together, including narrowed travel lanes, reduced curb radii, raised intersections, speed tables, and coordinated enforcement during peak

evening and weekend hours when racing activity is most common.

Action 2.11 Formalize an urban trail and greenbelt system connecting Klein Memorial Park, Plaza de Las Cruces, Pioneer Women’s Park, and regional trail networks, using streets, alleys, and callejitas as continuous green pedestrian routes.

Action 2.12 Install a comprehensive wayfinding system that clearly marks Downtown gateways, neighborhood connections, walking distances, and major destinations to improve legibility and comfort for residents and visitors.

Action 2.13 Evaluate Downtown and Mesquite MRAs to fund extensions of streetscape, safety, and connectivity improvements into adjoining neighborhoods.

Success indicators: Shorter crossing delays. Reduced speeding complaints. Higher foot traffic on Organ, Las Cruces, and Griggs.

TRANSIT & PARKING

Outcome: Dependable transit and well-managed parking.

Core Actions

Action 2.14 Improve transit usability downtown by reducing wait times, extending service hours into evenings and weekends, and improving the comfort and visibility of transit stops.

Action 2.15 Designate clearly marked loading zones on side streets and alleys to support businesses and reduce double parking and conflicts on Main Street and key corridors.

Action 2.16 Replace temporary event barricades with retractable bollards or flexible barrier systems that support public safety while maintaining the visual quality of the Plaza and Main Street.

Action 2.17 Add shade trees and stormwater friendly landscaping to remaining surface parking lots to reduce heat, manage runoff, and improve pedestrian comfort.

Success indicators: Higher downtown transit boardings. Fewer double-parked trucks. Safer event street closures. More shaded stalls and better stormwater performance.



3. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Downtown becomes resilient when people live there. This section focuses on adding homes that support everyday activity, strengthen local businesses, and make better use of existing streets and services. The approach prioritizes housing types that fit downtown's scale today and encourage incremental delivery. By concentrating on upper-floor conversions, small-lot infill, and mixed-use projects, these actions will grow the residential base while aligning private investment with long-term public goals. The result is a downtown that works on weekdays, supports transit, and feels like a neighborhood, not just a destination.

NEW & DIVERSE HOUSING

Outcome: More residents living downtown year round.

that reinforce walkability and proximity to jobs, services, and transit.

Core Actions

Action 3.1 Develop mixed-use buildings that combine housing with active ground-floor uses such as retail, services, offices, or community-oriented spaces.

Action 3.4 Redevelop upper floors of existing commercial buildings for residential use, supported by existing code flexibility for building reuse.

Action 3.5 Support context-sensitive townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes within Alameda Depot and Mesquite where compatible with existing neighborhood patterns and historic fabric.

Action 3.2 Add a range of housing types, including townhomes, condominiums, and apartments sized for different household types, incomes, and life stages.

Action 3.3 Convert vacant or underutilized buildings and surface lots into residential or live-work spaces, prioritizing sites

Success indicators: New units delivered. Upper floors returned to use. Fewer long-vacant properties.

AFFORDABILITY & INCENTIVES

Outcome: Projects pencil and remain attainable.

Core Actions

Action 3.6 Provide targeted gap funding, low-interest loans, and façade improvement grants where they directly enable housing delivery or adaptive reuse.

Action 3.7 Include attainable housing options in new projects, particularly for households earning up to 120% of Area Median Income, to support workforce and mixed-income living Downtown.

Action 3.8 Maintain streamlined zoning and permitting practices, and continue refining processes to reduce uncertainty and barriers for small, local, and incremental developers.

Action 3.9 Prepare City-owned parking lots for redevelopment by relocating utilities into public rights-of-way, providing water and wastewater taps, and resolving site constraints that increase upfront costs.

Success indicators: Projects closing with public support. Shorter permitting timelines. More participation by small or local developers.



4. BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Downtown thrives when everyday needs are easy to meet and local talent can grow. This section focuses on essentials that residents use weekly, support for entrepreneurs who create jobs, and simple rules that speed reinvestment. The payoff is practical, fuller storefronts, steadier evening activity, and a clearer path for local firms to expand downtown without losing their roots..

ESSENTIAL SERVICES & RETAIL

Outcome: Daily needs within a short walk.

Core Actions

Action 4.1 Recruit a downtown grocery store or year-round indoor food market to serve daily needs.

Action 4.2 Support neighborhood-scale corner stores and bodegas through flexible tenant sizing and targeted incentives that reduce startup costs.

Action 4.3 Encourage extended business hours by aligning lighting, safety, and programming investments to support evening activity and family-friendly use.

Action 4.4 Attract destination entertainment uses such as bowling, arcades, or a roller rink to diversify downtown activity beyond dining and nightlife.

Action 4.5 Use economic gardening strategies to help proven regional businesses expand into Downtown locations, focusing on operators with an existing customer base and operational capacity.

Action 4.6 Evaluate formation of a Downtown Business Improvement District and assess the feasibility of using TIDD-supported services to advance shared public-benefit functions, with a dedicated executive director focused on cleanliness, ambassadors, wayfinding, and coordinated hours, with eligible public-benefit functions supported through TIDD.

Success indicators: More storefronts open seven days. Grocery or indoor market secured. Longer evening hours on Main Street.

BUSINESS SUPPORT & REVITALIZATION

Outcome: Faster projects, fewer vacancies, stronger safety.

Action 4.7 Strengthen enforcement of noise, speeding, and public behavior ordinances.

Action 4.8 Fund Phase I environmental assessments for priority sites where uncertainty limits reinvestment.

Action 4.9 Create shared workspace and business incubation programs in partnership with the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library expansion, NMSU, and other institutions to support startups, creatives, and small firms.

Action 4.10 Establish a local loan fund to support small businesses, creative entrepreneurs, and tenant improvements in older buildings.

Action 4.11 Simplify outdoor seating and event permitting with clear standards and predictable timelines that reduce administrative friction for businesses.

Action 4.12 Launch a Vacancy-to-Vibrancy initiative that pairs incentives for renovation and leasing with clear expectations for maintenance and activation.

Action 4.13 Discourage long-term speculative vacancies through code enforcement, fee structures, or tax-based strategies that encourage productive use.

Success indicators: Less noise and speeding incidents. Measurable improvements in cleanliness, safety perception, and storefront activation. Growth in Downtown sales tax and gross receipts. Consistent BID service delivery and visible Downtown presence.



5. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Preservation is not a brake on progress, it is the character that makes investment worthwhile. This section aligns adaptive reuse, clear rules, and targeted public help so historic buildings, blocks, and streetscapes remain in daily use. The goal is to keep heritage working, adding homes and jobs while protecting the stories and craft that make downtown distinct.

RENOVATION & ADAPTIVE REUSE

Outcome: Historic buildings reused and reintegrated into daily Downtown life.

Core Actions

Action 5.1 Prioritize adaptive reuse of City-owned historic properties including the Amador Hotel, Rio Grande Theatre, and WIA Building, focusing on active public uses, cultural programming, and long-term economic sustainability.

Action 5.2 Support redevelopment of significant privately owned historic buildings such as the former County

Courthouse, Bruce Hotel, Boys and Girls Club, and Shook building through coordinated infrastructure investment, regulatory flexibility, and targeted gap financing.

Action 5.3 Facilitate reuse of historic structures for contemporary uses including housing, hospitality, offices, arts, and community-serving functions while meeting life safety requirements through existing building code pathways.

Success indicators: More occupied square footage in historic assets. Increased event and tenant activity in rehabilitated buildings.

POLICY & GUIDELINES

Outcome: Predictable standards that welcome investment and protect character.

Core Actions

Action 5.4 Balance preservation standards with context-sensitive flexibility in height, density, and use where appropriate to enable feasible rehabilitation and reinvestment.

Action 5.5 Continue the City's Historic Preservation program to provide consistent standards, predictable review processes, and alignment with Downtown development objectives.

Action 5.6 Apply Downtown development standards to new construction adjacent to historic resources, including parking structures, to ensure compatible massing, frontage, and street-level design.

Action 5.7 Retain and restore historic façades where feasible, while allowing contemporary architectural expression in compliance with the Downtown Development Code standards.

Success indicators: Faster review times for compliant projects. Fewer variance requests tied to preservation conflicts.



EDUCATION & FUNDING

Outcome: Informed owners and viable project finances.

Core Actions

Action 5.8 Install interpretive signage and develop self-guided walking tours that highlight Downtown's architectural, cultural, and social history.

Action 5.9 Pursue state and federal preservation grants and tax credits to reduce rehabilitation costs and improve project feasibility for eligible properties.

Action 5.10 Offer matching façade and preservation grants for private owners to encourage timely reinvestment and visible improvement of historic buildings.

Action 5.11 Provide technical assistance to property owners and developers on preservation requirements, funding opportunities, and adaptive reuse strategies.

Success indicators: More grant and credit applications submitted and awarded. Increased participation in walking tours. Visible façade improvements on priority blocks.



6. ARTS, CULTURE & PROGRAMMING

Culture is the operating system of downtown. Regular events, creative workspaces, and visible arts make ordinary days feel worth the trip. This section supports artists and organizations while pairing physical improvements with consistent programming.

CREATIVE SPACES Core Actions

Outcome: Artists and creative firms with room to live, work, and stay.

Action 6.1 Create permanently affordable artist housing through public-private partnerships that secure long-term affordability.

Action 6.2 Provide affordable makerspaces and studios within underutilized or historic buildings, sized for individual artists and small creative enterprises.

Action 6.3 Establish shared workspaces and incubation programs for creative businesses, coordinated with existing economic development and university partners.

Success indicators: Creative units leased. Makerspace occupancy and participation. New creative enterprises launched.

CULTURAL PROGRAMMING Core Actions

Outcome: A reliable calendar that fills evenings and connects neighborhoods to Main Street.

Core Actions

Action 6.4 Expand Music at the Rio Grande to include more frequent performances and a broader mix of regional and touring acts.

Action 6.5 Continue and formalize outdoor movies and seasonal arts events in parks, plazas, and underused Downtown spaces.

Action 6.6 Enhance First Fridays and related monthly programming through improved coordination, marketing, and cross-promotion among venues.

Action 6.7 Establish Open Streets events that temporarily close select corridors to vehicles, linking Downtown with Mesquite and Alameda Depot through walkable, arts-focused programming.

Success indicators: More programmed days per month. Higher attendance across seasons. Increased sales during event windows.

This section explains how the Downtown Master Plan Update moves from ideas to funded projects to on-the-ground results. It is a practical guide for City staff, partners, and decision-makers to understand who leads, how priorities advance, and the tools available to deliver projects. Implementation is organized around clear responsibility, coordinated action, and strategic use of public investment to reduce risk and attract private and nonprofit development.

LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Implementation of the Downtown Master Plan Update is led by the **Community Development Department**, with support from Economic Development, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization, Sustainability, and more. This role includes coordinating planning, development review, partnerships, and the use of TIDD funds within the Downtown MRA. The Community Development Department is responsible for translating plan priorities into scoped projects, aligning funding strategies, and coordinating work across departments to move projects forward.

Many Downtown improvements are designed and constructed by **Public Works**, but overall direction and accountability remain centralized. The **City Manager** provides executive oversight, resolves interdepartmental issues, and ensures Downtown projects remain aligned with Citywide priorities and available resources. The **TIDD Board**, composed of the **City Council** and a representative from **Doña Ana County**, provides policy direction and approval of projects and funding allocations, ensuring public accountability and transparency. This structure establishes clear leadership, defined roles, and a single point of responsibility, allowing Downtown projects to advance efficiently while drawing on the expertise of multiple departments and partners.

FROM PRIORITY TO PROJECT

This plan is designed to move ideas into action. Each priority and action identified in the Downtown Las Cruces Master Plan Update is intended to translate into a defined project, with a clear scope, responsible parties, and an identifiable path to funding and delivery. Projects move forward through a simple, repeatable sequence:

- **Plan alignment:** Projects must directly advance the goals and actions in this plan. This ensures limited staff time and funding are focused on agreed priorities.
- **Project definition:** The Community Development Department defines the project scope, location, estimated cost range, and intended outcomes. This includes identifying whether the project is infrastructure, housing support, public space, regulatory action, or a catalyst site.
- **Department coordination:** Community Development coordinates with Public Works, Utilities, Parks and Recreation, Housing and Neighborhood Services, Economic Development, and other departments as needed to confirm feasibility, timing, and delivery responsibilities. The City Manager provides overall direction.
- **Funding strategy:** Each project is paired with a funding approach. This may include TIDD revenues, capital improvement funds, grants, partnerships, or layered public and private financing. Projects relying primarily on City-controlled resources are prioritized for near-term action.
- **Approval and authorization:** Projects using TIDD funds are reviewed and approved by City Council acting as the TIDD Board. Other projects follow existing City approval processes based on scope and funding source.
- **Design, delivery, and oversight:** Once authorized, departments responsible for construction or implementation advance design, permitting, and delivery. Community Development remains the point of coordination to ensure the project stays aligned with Downtown goals.
- **Monitoring and adjustment:** Projects are revisited as conditions change. Funding availability may require adjustments without losing sight of the original intent.



IMPLEMENTATION
HOW DOWNTOWN GETS BUILT

FUNDING AND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Implementation of the Downtown Las Cruces Master Plan Update depends on assembling layered capital stacks that combine local, state, and federal resources in a way that reduces risk, improves feasibility, and leverages private and nonprofit investment. No single funding source can deliver downtown redevelopment on its own. Instead, public investment is most effective when it is used strategically to lower upfront barriers, support shared infrastructure, and position projects to compete successfully for outside funding.

Local funding and regulatory tools form the foundation of downtown implementation and should be deployed first to unlock subsequent investment.

Tax Increment Development District (TIDD)

TIDD revenues are best used for public and publicly controlled improvements that directly reduce development risk. Eligible uses include street conversions, sidewalks and curbs, lighting, shade and landscaping, utilities, wayfinding, public spaces, and publicly owned or operated parking facilities. TIDD may also support housing components when affordability thresholds are met, consistent with state anti-donation requirements, including projects serving households up to 120% of Area Median Income where allowed by statute.

Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area

The Downtown Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA) provides the City's primary framework for shaping redevelopment outcomes. Through the MRA, the City can assemble and dispose of land, enter into development agreements, structure long-term ground leases, and negotiate public benefits such as mixed-income housing and active ground-floor uses. The MRA is the key mechanism for aligning public investment with private delivery while retaining long-term public leverage.

City-Controlled Assets and Local Gap Tools

City-owned land, deferred or reduced fees, residual receipts loans, and targeted gap financing play an important role in improving project feasibility. Residual receipts structures allow repayment to be deferred until a project achieves positive cash flow, reducing early financial pressure while preserving long-term public return. These tools are especially important for catalytic sites, adaptive reuse projects, and mixed-use development on former surface parking lots.

Housing Affordability and Capital Alignment

Different housing price points require different funding combinations, and successful downtown projects often layer multiple tools:

- Workforce and mixed-income housing (approximately 80-120% AMI) is best supported through local gap financing, Housing Opportunity Fund loans, residual receipts structures, and MRA land strategies.

- Low-income housing (≤60% AMI) typically relies on Low-Income Housing Tax Credits and HOME or CDBG funds layered with local infrastructure investment.
- Very low-income housing (≤30% AMI) generally depends on National and State Housing Trust Fund resources, often in combination with tax credits and City participation.

Aligning these tools intentionally allows Downtown to support a range of housing types while maintaining economic viability.

Importance of Predevelopment Funding

A recurring barrier to downtown redevelopment is the lack of funding for early-stage predevelopment activities, including environmental assessments, historic review, infrastructure analysis, and schematic design. Targeted local investment in these activities significantly improves a project's competitiveness for state and federal funding and reduces uncertainty for private and nonprofit partners. Establishing a predictable source of predevelopment support is one of the most effective ways the City can accelerate implementation.

State and Federal Funding as Leverage

Once local tools are in place, state and federal programs can be layered to support vertical development, affordability, and reinvestment in existing buildings. These sources may include housing tax credits, housing trust funds, capital outlay, infrastructure and economic development grants, historic rehabilitation tax credits, and energy or resilience incentives. Downtown projects that are well-structured locally are better positioned to attract these competitive resources.

Using Public Investment Strategically

By coordinating funding sources, regulatory tools, and public investments, the City can use public dollars to leverage greater private and nonprofit investment. This layered approach allows Downtown projects to proceed in phases, respond to market conditions, and deliver housing, jobs, and public realm improvements while remaining aligned with community priorities.

FUNDING TOOLS THAT MAKE DOWNTOWN PROJECTS FEASIBLE

LEVEL	PROGRAM	PRIMARY APPLICATION IN DOWNTOWN
Local	Tax Increment Development District (TIDD)	Streets, sidewalks, utilities, shade, lighting, public spaces, wayfinding, structured public parking, and eligible affordable housing components tied to public benefit
Local	Metropolitan Redevelopment Area (MRA)	Land assembly, property disposition, development agreements, mixed-income housing, and active ground-floor uses
Local	City-owned land and long-term ground leases	Reduces upfront land cost, improves feasibility for mixed-use, housing, and civic projects while retaining public leverage
Local	Residual receipts loans	Deferred repayment until positive cash flow, supports mixed-income and workforce housing projects
State	Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (4% & 9%)	Primary equity source for affordable rental housing, including mixed-use and adaptive reuse
State	New Mexico Housing Trust Fund	Affordable and workforce housing development and preservation
State	State capital outlay	Civic facilities, infrastructure, cultural assets, and public improvements
Federal	HOME Investment Partnerships Program	Gap financing for affordable and attainable housing
Federal	Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Housing rehabilitation, eligible public improvements benefiting low- and moderate-income households
Federal	Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit	Reduces cost of adaptive reuse for income-producing historic buildings
Federal	National Housing Trust Fund	Rental housing serving extremely low-income households, typically layered with tax credits

Downtown projects rarely rely on a single funding source. While this plan identifies several individual programs available to support reinvestment, most successful projects combine multiple tools into a coordinated capital stack. The following table illustrates how commonly used local, state, and federal programs can be paired to support different types of Downtown projects, from infrastructure and placemaking to housing, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use redevelopment.

FUNDING TOOLS THAT PAIR BEST TOGETHER

PROJECT TYPE	PRIMARY TOOLS	COMPLEMENTARY TOOLS	HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER
Public Infrastructure & Placemaking	TIDD, NM MainStreet Capital Outlay	State Capital Outlay, Federal grants via HUD/ Infrastructure programs	TIDD funds core improvements (streets, lighting, public spaces) while MainStreet capital outlay supports streetscape and infrastructure in designated areas; matching state capital outlay amplifies impact, and federal grants (e.g., from HUD competitive programs) can add additional funding for planning, design, and construction.
Workforce Housing Development (80-120% AMI)	NMFA Housing Development Revolving Fund, City gap financing	TIDD for infrastructure and utilities	NMFA Housing Development loans finance construction and infrastructure; pairing with City gap funding (e.g., residual receipts loans) and TIDD infrastructure reduces cost risk and improves feasibility.
Affordable Rental Housing (≤60% AMI)	Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (4%/9%), HOME Program	New Mexico Housing Trust Fund, residual receipts or gap financing	LIHTCs provide equity; HOME funds act as gap financing; NMHTF flexible funds can support acquisition or infrastructure, and local gap financing smooths shortfalls.
Extremely Low-Income Housing (<30% AMI)	National Housing Trust Fund	LIHTC mix, HOME funds	NHTF provides a deep subsidy for lowest-income units; combining with LIHTCs and HOME gives layered capital to meet deeper affordability.
Historic Building Adaptive Re-use	Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits	TIDD for site prep/public realm, State capital outlay	Federal tax credits reduce rehabilitation costs; TIDD covers public infrastructure and site readiness; state capital outlay can support related public improvements.
Catalytic Mixed-Use Development	MRA land assembly/tools	TIDD infrastructure, LIHTC or NMHTF for housing component	MRA enables land assemblage and development agreements; TIDD builds supportive infrastructure; affordable housing tools fill housing components, creating mixed-use feasibility.
Downtown Economic & Commercial Revitalization	NM MainStreet Capital Outlay	TIDD infrastructure, HUD competitive grants	MainStreet capital outlay augments local infrastructure and facade improvements; TIDD covers related public investments; federal HUD competitive funds (e.g., Choice Neighborhoods Planning) can support related planning and implementation.

MAKING THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT CODE WORK

The Downtown Development Code was created to support context sensitive, walkable, mixed use development that reflects Downtown’s historic form and neighborhood identity. While the intent of the code is sound, feedback from the October 2025 charrette indicates that the code is often perceived as difficult to navigate or disconnected from the broader 2025 Land Development Code. Improving how the Downtown Development Code functions in practice is essential to accelerating reinvestment and reducing unnecessary friction for projects that align with City goals.

Clarify how the Downtown Development Code fits within the 2025 Land Development Code.

The Downtown Development Code should be repositioned as a three districts within the 2025 Land Development Code framework, not as a parallel or standalone system. Clear cross references, simplified applicability language, and a short “how to use this code” section at the beginning of the Downtown chapter would help users quickly understand which standards apply, and when discretionary review is required.

Translate form standards into visual guidance.

While the Downtown Development Code relies on form based principles, many users struggle to interpret standards. A companion user guide, separate from the regulatory text, should include diagrams showing compliant frontage types, building placement, massing transitions on Main Street, parking access strategies, and acceptable variations. This guidance would not change the code, but would make compliance clearer and reduce negotiation during review.

Use pilot projects to test refinements.

The City should use early catalyst sites and City controlled parcels to test streamlined review procedures, alternative compliance options, and adaptive reuse flexibility within the Downtown Development Code. Lessons learned from these projects can inform targeted amendments or administrative interpretations without requiring a full code rewrite.

Pair regulatory clarity with early staff guidance.

Pre-application meetings should focus on confirming eligibility, identifying applicable Downtown feasibility at time of implementation, and flagging constraints early. Clear, consistent guidance at the front end reduces uncertainty, builds trust, and improves project outcomes for both applicants and the City.

Together, these actions shift the Downtown Development Code from a perceived barrier to a practical tool. By improving clarity, predictability, and ease of use, the City can better support the type of small scale, mixed use, and adaptive reuse projects that are most likely to shape Downtown’s next phase of reinvestment.

2026 DOWNTOWN PROGRESS DASHBOARD

This 2026 Downtown Progress Dashboard is the plan’s simple progress log. It lists each action from the Master Plan and its targeted delivery timeframe, so anyone can see what is ongoing. The intent is transparency and follow through, with a clear way to keep momentum visible over time without adding extra process or new policy. Short-term is 1 - 3 years, Mid-term is 3 - 5 years, and Ongoing is a long-term and continuing activity. This dashboard repeats the actions in earlier sections, without the discussion, outcomes, success indicators and graphics, focusing on actions and target completion timeframes.

#	ACTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	ON-GOING
1	PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE: SHADE & COOLING, LIGHTING & SAFETY, PUBLIC SPACES			
1.1	Plant native or well-adapted street trees with sufficient soil volume and rooting space to support long-term canopy growth, prioritizing Las Cruces, Organ, and Griggs in the near-term.			■
1.2	Install shade structures or architectural shade elements where trees are not feasible, including within Plaza de Las Cruces, along key sidewalks and callecitas, and at transit stops.	■		
1.3	Expand green infrastructure where feasible, including bioswales, permeable paving, and landscape-based stormwater features that reduce heat, manage runoff, and improve microclimate performance.			■
1.4	Coordinate shade placement with seating, gathering areas, and pedestrian routes to ensure shade is usable throughout the day and across seasons, not limited to isolated locations.	■		
1.5	Install pedestrian-scale lighting on side streets, alleys, parking areas, and in parks to improve visibility, support evening activity, and address safety concerns without creating glare or over-lighting.		■	
1.6	Upgrade lighting within the Plaza & along callecitas to support nighttime use, small events, & informal gathering while maintaining clear sightlines.	■		
1.7	Ensure transit stops & waiting areas are well lit , with lighting that supports visibility of approaching vehicles, surrounding sidewalks, & adjacent uses.		■	
1.8	Prioritize consistent lighting maintenance and replacement schedules so improvements remain effective over time.			■
1.9	Strengthen connections between parks, trails, & civic spaces by improving wayfinding, surface conditions, & visual continuity between Klein Memorial Park, Pioneer Women’s Park, the Plaza, and surrounding streets.		■	
1.10	Add durable public seating, landscaping, and public art along streets and within the Plaza to support informal gathering, rest, and social interaction throughout the day.		■	
1.11	Assure public restrooms have twenty-four-hour access, and are designed for durability, safety, and ease of maintenance.		■	
1.12	Install drinking fountains, dog waste stations, trash and recycling receptacles, and vendor power outlets in Plaza locations that support daily use and events without cluttering primary pedestrian routes.		■	
1.13	Replace hostile or exclusionary design elements with welcoming benches, edges, and seating that accommodate a range of ages and abilities.			■
1.14	Introduce simple play or game elements within callecitas and secondary spaces to encourage everyday activation beyond scheduled programming.		■	

#	ACTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	ON-GOING
2	CONNECTIVITY: PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE SAFETY, NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS, TRANSIT & PARKING			
2.1	Install High Intensity Activated Crosswalk beacons where warranted at priority locations to improve pedestrian visibility and right of way compliance on arterial streets (not on Main Street).	■		
2.2	Study and pilot raised crosswalks at these same locations, subject to drainage, emergency response, and freight considerations, to reinforce pedestrian priority, slow vehicle speeds at intersections, and improve accessibility.		■	
2.3	Maintain high visibility zebra striping at all marked crosswalks outside of Main Street through a scheduled repainting and inspection program to ensure markings remain visible year round, particularly after monsoon season.			■
2.4	Construct protected bicycle facilities on priority corridors according to the Active Transportation Plan, focusing first on routes that connect Downtown to Mesquite, Alameda Depot, and regional trails.		■	
2.5	Widen sidewalks beyond Main Street where right of way allows, with consistent clear zones that meet ADA standards and accommodate shade, lighting, and street furnishings without obstructing pedestrian movement.			■
2.6	Improve signal timing for pedestrians at key crossings by lengthening walk intervals, reducing wait times, and prioritizing pedestrian phases in areas with high foot traffic.		■	
2.7	Coordinate with NMDOT on speed management strategies on Lohman Avenue and Amador Avenue that are consistent with state roadway standards.			■
2.8	Improve Organ, Las Cruces, and Griggs streetscapes as pedestrian priority connectors linking Downtown with Mesquite and Alameda Depot, with shade, lighting, bicycle facilities, and traffic calming appropriate to neighborhood context.		■	
2.9	Separate pedestrian signal phases from left turn movements at Alameda Boulevard crossings, particularly at Organ, Las Cruces, and Griggs, to reduce conflict points and improve safety for people walking.		■	
2.10	Address drag racing through design and enforcement working together, including narrowed travel lanes, reduced curb radii, raised intersections, speed tables, and coordinated enforcement during peak evening and weekend hours when racing activity is most common.			■
2.11	Formalize an urban trail and greenbelt system connecting Klein Memorial Park, Plaza de Las Cruces, Pioneer Women’s Park, and regional trail networks, using streets, alleys, and callecitas as continuous green pedestrian routes.			■
2.12	Install a comprehensive wayfinding system that clearly marks Downtown gateways, neighborhood connections, walking distances, and major destinations to improve legibility and comfort for residents and visitors.			■

#	ACTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	ON-GOING
2.13	Evaluate Downtown and Mesquite MRAs to fund extensions of streetscape, safety & connectivity improvements into adjoining neighborhoods.	■		
2.14	Improve transit usability downtown by reducing wait times, extending service hours into evenings and weekends, and improving the comfort and visibility of transit stops.			■
2.15	Designate clearly marked loading zones on side streets and alleys to support businesses and reduce double parking and conflicts on Main Street and key corridors.		■	
2.16	Replace temporary event barricades with retractable bollards or flexible barrier systems that support public safety while maintaining the visual quality of the Plaza and Main Street.		■	
2.17	Add shade trees & stormwater friendly landscaping to remaining surface parking lots to reduce heat, manage runoff, and improve pedestrian comfort.			■
3	HOUSING DEVELOPMENT: NEW & DIVERSE HOUSING, AFFORDABILITY & INCENTIVES			
3.1	Develop mixed-use buildings that combine housing with active ground-floor uses such as retail, services, offices, or community-oriented spaces.		■	
3.2	Add a range of housing types , including townhomes, condominiums, and apartments sized for different household types, incomes, and life stages.		■	
3.3	Convert vacant or underutilized buildings and surface lots into residential or live-work spaces, prioritizing sites that reinforce walkability and proximity to jobs, services, and transit.			■
3.4	Redevelop upper floors of existing commercial buildings for residential use, supported by existing code flexibility for building reuse.			■
3.5	Support context-sensitive townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes within Alameda Depot and Mesquite where compatible with existing neighborhood patterns and historic fabric.		■	
3.6	Provide targeted gap funding, low-interest loans, and façade improvement grants where they directly enable housing delivery or adaptive reuse.		■	
3.7	Include attainable housing options in new projects, particularly for households earning up to 120% of Area Median Income, to support workforce and mixed-income living Downtown.			■
3.8	Maintain streamlined zoning and permitting practices , and continue refining processes to reduce uncertainty and barriers for small, local, and incremental developers.			■
3.9	Prepare City-owned parking lots for redevelopment by relocating utilities into public rights-of-way, providing water and wastewater taps, and resolving site constraints that increase upfront costs.	■		

#	ACTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	ON-GOING
4	BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: ESSENTIAL SERVICES & RETAIL, BUSINESS SUPPORT & REVITALIZATION			
4.1	Recruit a downtown grocery store or year-round indoor food market to serve daily needs.	■		
4.2	Support neighborhood-scale corner stores & bodegas thru flexible tenant sizing and targeted incentives that reduce startup costs.		■	
4.3	Encourage extended business hours by aligning lighting, safety, and programming investments to support evening activity and family-friendly use.	■		
4.4	Attract destination entertainment uses such as bowling, arcades, or a roller rink to diversify downtown activity beyond dining & nightlife.		■	
4.5	Use economic gardening strategies to help proven regional businesses expand into Downtown locations, focusing on operators with an existing customer base and operational capacity.			■
4.6	Evaluate formation of a Downtown Business Improvement District and assess the feasibility of using TIDD-supported services to advance shared public-benefit functions, with a dedicated executive director focused on cleanliness, maintenance, ambassadors, wayfinding, coordinated hours, and storefront activation, with eligible public-benefit functions supported through TIDD where appropriate.	■		
4.7	Strengthen enforcement of existing ordinances related to noise, speeding, and public behavior to support outdoor dining, events, and pedestrian comfort.		■	
4.8	Fund Phase I environmental assessments for priority sites where uncertainty limits reinvestment, particularly for historic or long-vacant properties.	■		
4.9	Create shared workspace and business incubation programs in partnership with the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library expansion, NMSU, and other institutions to support startups, creatives, and small firms..		■	
4.10	Establish a local loan or revolving fund to support small businesses, creative entrepreneurs, and tenant improvements in older buildings.		■	
4.11	Simplify outdoor seating and event permitting with clear standards and predictable timelines that reduce administrative friction for businesses.		■	
4.12	Launch a Vacancy-to-Vibrancy initiative that pairs incentives for renovation and leasing with clear expectations for maintenance and activation.			■
4.13	Discourage long-term speculative vacancies through code enforcement, fee structures, or tax-based strategies that encourage productive use.			■

#	ACTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	ON-GOING
5. HISTORIC PRESERVATION				
5.1	Prioritize adaptive reuse of City-owned historic properties including the Amador Hotel, Rio Grande Theatre, and WIA Building, focusing on active public uses, cultural programming, and long-term economic sustainability.			■
5.2	Support redevelopment of significant privately owned historic buildings such as the former County Courthouse, Bruce Hotel, Boys and Girls Club, and Shook building through coordinated infrastructure investment, regulatory flexibility, and targeted gap financing.			■
5.3	Facilitate reuse of historic structures for contemporary uses including housing, hospitality, offices, arts, and community-serving functions while meeting life safety requirements through existing building code pathways.		■	
5.4	Balance preservation standards with context-sensitive flexibility in height, density, and use where appropriate to enable feasible rehabilitation and reinvestment.			■
5.5	Continue the City's Historic Preservation program to provide consistent standards, predictable review processes, and alignment with Downtown development objectives.			■
5.6	Apply Downtown development standards to new construction adjacent to historic resources, including parking structures, to ensure compatible massing, frontage, and street-level design.	■		
5.7	Retain and restore historic façades where feasible, while allowing contemporary architectural expression in compliance with the Downtown Development Code standards.			■
5.8	Install interpretive signage and develop self-guided walking tours that highlight Downtown's architectural, cultural, and social history.		■	
5.9	Pursue state and federal preservation grants and tax credits to reduce rehabilitation costs and improve project feasibility for eligible properties.		■	
5.10	Offer matching façade and preservation grants for private owners to encourage timely reinvestment and visible improvement of historic buildings.			■
5.11	Provide technical assistance to property owners and developers on preservation requirements, funding opportunities, and adaptive reuse strategies.			■

#	ACTION	SHORT TERM	MID TERM	ON-GOING
6. ARTS, CULTURE, & PROGRAMMING				
6.1	Create permanently affordable artist housing through public-private partnerships that secure long-term affordability.		■	
6.2	Provide affordable makerspaces and studios within underutilized or historic buildings, sized for individual artists and small creative enterprises.		■	
6.3	Establish shared workspaces and incubation programs for creative businesses, coordinated with existing economic development and university partners.		■	
6.4	Expand Music at the Rio Grande to include more frequent performances and a broader mix of regional and touring acts.			■
6.5	Continue and formalize outdoor movies and seasonal arts events in parks, plazas, and underused Downtown spaces.			■
6.6	Enhance First Fridays and related monthly programming through improved coordination, marketing, and cross-promotion among venues.			■
6.7	Establish Open Streets events that temporarily close select corridors to vehicles, linking Downtown with Mesquite and Alameda Depot through walkable, arts-focused programming.			■

The **2026 Downtown Progress Dashboard** reflects a community that has delivered results ahead of schedule. In 2025, less than halfway through the original 20-year planning horizon, Downtown Las Cruces has completed or advanced a majority of the actions identified in the 2016 Downtown Master Plan. This level of progress is notable not only for its pace, but for its consistency: improvements to streets, public spaces, mobility, business support, and preservation have steadily moved Downtown from vision to implementation. The 2026 dashboard builds on that momentum, tracking a new generation of actions shaped by updated policy direction, market conditions, and community priorities.

The dashboard.bit.ly/Downtown2016 documents progress on the **2016 Downtown Master Plan**, which was organized around the Comprehensive Plan priorities in place at that time. As a result, the structure, categories, and terminology differ from the 2026 update, even where many of the underlying ideas remain consistent. The 2016 plan emphasized Healthy Community, Community Character, Economic Prosperity, and Sustainable Growth, while the 2026 update aligns with the current Comprehensive Plan framework. Read together, the two dashboards tell a continuous story: one of long-term commitment, adaptability, and a Downtown that has repeatedly exceeded expectations while evolving to meet new challenges and opportunities.

2026 DOWNTOWN BENCHMARKS AND TARGETS (2026-2031)

The 2026 Downtown Benchmark framework shifts the focus from broad citywide indicators to measurable, downtown-specific outcomes tied directly to implementation tools. Rather than tracking general demographic conditions, this dashboard emphasizes indicators that the City and its partners downtown can actively influence: housing production, ground-floor vitality, mobility safety, daily-needs access, and public realm investment.

The purpose of the benchmark system is twofold. First, it creates accountability for focused efforts to improve, conserve, and redevelop Downtown. Second, it establishes a five-year performance horizon (to 2031) that aligns capital planning, TIDD/MRA investments, zoning, and economic development tools around quantifiable outcomes. Each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is tied to a defined geography, a primary data source, and specific implementation levers so that progress can be measured consistently over time.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	DOWNTOWN DEFINITION	PRIMARY DATA SOURCES	FIVE-YEAR TARGET (BY 2031)	EXISTING OR IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION LEVERS
1 HOUSING				
Annual Housing Starts	New residential permits issued in Downtown TIDD	City building permit dataset	≥ 12 units permitted per year by year 5	Infrastructure sequencing; code flexibility; impact fee alignment
Net New Housing Units	Completed residential units in Downtown TIDD	City building permits + certificate of occupancy records	+ 50 net new units over 5 years	TIDD gap financing; MRA development agreement; public land disposition
2 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT				
Daily-Needs Anchor (Grocery / Market)	Year-round full-service grocery in the Downtown TIDD	Business registration + development tracking	1 grocery within 5 years	Tenant improvement grants; TIDD assistance; targeted recruitment; RFP for catalyst site
Ground Floor Vacancy Rate	Vacant ground-floor spaces in the Downtown TIDD	Annual ground floor vacancy inventory	10% reduction in total vacancies by year 5 (from 2026 of 12 to 18)	Façade grants; small business incentives; upper-floor housing activation; pop-up incubator programs
Net Business Growth	Downtown TIDD business openings minus closures	Business registration records	+ 10 net new businesses over 5 years	Technical assistance; local incentives; flexible zoning; reduced permitting friction

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR (KPI)	DOWNTOWN DEFINITION	PRIMARY DATA SOURCES	FIVE-YEAR TARGET (BY 2031)	EXISTING OR IMPROVED IMPLEMENTATION LEVERS
3 MOBILITY				
Enhanced Crossings Delivered	Raised crossings, curb extensions, leading pedestrian intervals in and around the Downtown TIDD	City capital project log	≥ 5 enhanced crossings over 5 years	Capital improvement programming; quick-build materials; grant funding
Protected Bikeway Connections	Protected or separated bike facilities linking downtown to neighborhoods	Transportation GIS inventory	≥ 2 enhanced connections over 5 years	Federal / state grants; roadway redesign; reallocation of right-of-way
Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety	Injuries from car crashes in Downtown TIDD	NMDOT crash dataset (spatially filtered)	- 20% injuries (from 2018-2023: 5 serious and 89 minor injuries)	Speed management; street design
4 AFFORDABILITY				
Housing + Transportation Cost Burden	% of household income spent on housing + transportation in N Downtown	CNT H+T Index (downtown geography)	Maintain ≤45% total (from 2026: Housing: 22% Transportation: 23%)	Increase housing supply; multimodal access; reduce auto dependence
Walkability Score	At fixed downtown reference location of N. Main St. at W. Las Cruces Ave.	Walk Score annual capture	+ 2 points (from 2026: 87 "Very Walkable"; up from 75 in 2016)	Mixed-use infill; shade expansion; crossing upgrades
5 LIVABILITY, ENVIRONMENT, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, AND ARTS				
Street Trees and Shade Additions	Net new trees planted within downtown parking lots, streets, and connectors	Urban forestry inventory	+ 20 trees; measurable canopy increase over 5 years	Streetscape capital projects; TIDD funding; maintenance allocation
Green Infrastructure Installations	Bioswales, permeable paving, stormwater curb cuts installed downtown	Stormwater Capital Improvement Program project tracking	≥ 3 installations over 5 years	Capital projects; right-of-way standards update; grant stacking
Historic Rehabs / Adaptive Reuse	Substantial rehabilitation projects completed within downtown	Permit tagging + historic review records	2 meaningful rehabs over 5 years	Historic tax credits; TIDD assistance; code flexibility
Arts & Civic Programming Days	Total programmed event days annually in downtown core	City event logs	+ 10% annual programmed days over 5 years	Partnership agreements; sponsorships; plaza operations funding

V. RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT

DOWNTOWN HOUSING MARKET CONTEXT

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SETS A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR EXPANDING HOUSING CHOICE ACROSS THE CITY. WHILE MOST HOUSING IN LAS CRUCES IS MADE UP OF SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES, HOUSEHOLD NEEDS ARE CHANGING. PEOPLE ARE LIVING ALONE LONGER, AGING IN PLACE, FORMING SMALLER HOUSEHOLDS, AND LOOKING FOR WALKABLE PLACES WITH ACCESS TO DAILY SERVICES. THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CALLS FOR A BROADER MIX OF HOUSING TYPES, ESPECIALLY IN ACTIVITY CENTERS LIKE DOWNTOWN, WHERE DAILY NEEDS, JOBS, AND CIVIC SPACES ARE CLOSE AT HAND.

Within that policy framework, Downtown is identified as a logical place for additional housing, including apartments and mixed-use buildings. The emphasis is not on chasing specific demographic groups, but on creating places where people can live with fewer daily car trips. Housing located near jobs, services, parks, and cultural destinations supports walking, biking, and transit use, and helps Downtown function as a complete neighborhood rather than a single-purpose district (City of Las Cruces, Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan, Volume I).

Main Street teems with culture

RESIDENTIAL



WATER STREET ILLUSTRATION

Affordability is a key part of this conversation. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan recognizes that housing costs cannot be separated from transportation costs. The Housing plus Transportation Index shows that combined housing and transportation costs in Las Cruces average about half of household income, above the generally accepted affordability threshold. Downtown performs better on this measure, reflecting its walkability and proximity to services. Adding housing in Downtown can help reduce overall household costs by lowering transportation expenses, even when rents or prices are similar to other parts of the city (Center for Neighborhood Technology, H+T Index for Las Cruces, NM; City of Las Cruces, Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan, Volume I).

The 2021 Downtown Housing Study reinforces this approach with market-specific findings. At the time of the study, Downtown had a tight rental market with low vacancy, indicating capacity for additional housing if amenities and connections continue to improve. The study found that rental multi-family housing was more feasible under local market conditions, while for-sale housing faced greater financing challenges. These findings support a cautious, incremental approach rather than large, speculative projects (City of Las Cruces, 2021 Downtown Housing Study).

Taken together, these findings point toward a Downtown housing strategy focused on steady, context-sensitive growth. The Master Plan Update avoids fixed unit targets or outdated assumptions and instead emphasizes flexibility, project-level feasibility, and coordination with infrastructure, mobility, and public space improvements. The goal is not just more housing, but housing that strengthens Downtown as a livable, connected neighborhood over time.

RETAIL



TRADE AREA REPRESENTS A PENT UP MARKET FOR DOWNTOWN COMMERCE

DOWNTOWN RETAIL & COMMERCIAL CONTEXT

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan defines Downtown as the city's civic and cultural heart, not a conventional retail center competing with suburban shopping districts. The Comprehensive Plan frames Downtown as an activity center where retail supports walkability, neighborhood identity, and daily needs alongside housing, employment, civic spaces, and cultural amenities. This reflects a shift away from auto-oriented retail toward mixed-use environments where shopping, dining, and social life are integrated into the public realm (City of Las Cruces, Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan, Volume I).

Consistent with this approach, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan does not set retail square-footage targets for Downtown. Instead, it emphasizes incremental infill, reuse of existing buildings, and reinvestment along Main Street and surrounding blocks to strengthen Downtown as a destination. The plan acknowledges that decades of suburban growth have permanently dispersed traditional retail demand and that Downtown revitalization depends more on cultivating a distinct, locally rooted commercial identity than on recapturing lost retail volume (City of Las Cruces,

Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan, Volume I).

The 2021 Downtown Housing Study reinforces this direction by linking residential demand to downtown activity and everyday amenities. Although focused on housing feasibility, the study highlights the interdependence between residential growth and street-level uses such as restaurants, cafés, and neighborhood-serving services. Rather than recommending large-scale retail expansion, the study indicates that downtown retail viability is tied to incremental housing growth, placemaking investments, and improved connections to adjacent neighborhoods (City of Las Cruces, 2021 Downtown Housing Study).

Both documents emphasize the role of existing anchors and activity generators, including New Mexico State University, nearby neighborhoods, civic institutions, and recurring events such as the Downtown Farmers' & Crafts Market. These assets sustain Downtown's function as a social and civic gathering place even with limited traditional retail, and support small-scale, locally owned businesses that benefit from foot traffic and repeat visits rather than

DOWNTOWN LAS CRUCES CAN SATISFY DEMAND FOR URBAN RETAIL

national chains or large-format retail (City of Las Cruces, Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan, Volume I).

Together, these findings suggest that Downtown's retail future should be understood as an ecosystem shaped by housing, public space, mobility, and programming, not by retail square-foot expansion. The Downtown Master Plan Update therefore focuses on creating the conditions that support retail over time, including active ground floors, adaptive reuse, flexible tenant spaces, walkability, and consistent activation, while evaluating retail feasibility incrementally in response to demonstrated demand rather than fixed numerical targets.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

TO-DO LIST: THINK LONG-TERM BUT START WITH SHORT-RANGE FOCUS

“A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO BE.”

The people of Las Cruces spoke, and the planning team listened. With each new comment, consistent themes began to emerge.

“BUILD ON PAST SUCCESSSES.”

Highlight our assets. Showcase the Plaza, streetscape improvements, farmers market, and cultural programming in promotional efforts.

“FOSTER COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS.”

Reconnect Downtown and Neighborhoods

Link Downtown, Alameda, and Mesquite with safer, greener streets and better transit to repair past urban renewal impacts and create a unified, walkable district.

Activate Vacant and Historic Spaces

Redevelop empty lots and historic buildings into mixed-use housing, studios, and small businesses to fill street-level gaps and bring life to downtown.

“INCLUDE HOUSING NEARBY.”

Grow Housing to Support Downtown

Encourage affordable, workforce, and market-rate housing to help local businesses thrive and curb vacancy. Redevelop parking lots and unused buildings into mixed-use housing over retail, and allow infill homes in nearby neighborhoods to build the population needed to sustain downtown.

“IMPROVE SHADE AND COMFORT.”

Make Downtown Comfortable Year-Round

Add trees, shade structures, & better lighting to reduce heat & make downtown usable day & night.

Make Downtown Safe & Accessible for Everyone

Install protected bike lanes, safer crosswalks, traffic calming on Lohman and Amador, and ADA-accessible routes to create a truly walkable, multi-modal downtown.

“INCREASE BUSINESS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY.”

Focus on Catalyst Sites and Historic Buildings

Prioritize stalled or historic properties for mixed-use development – housing, retail, groceries – to spark downtown revitalization.

Support Local Makers and Businesses

Provide affordable spaces, maker hubs, and incubator partnerships to grow local entrepreneurship and creative industries.

Expand Cultural Life Downtown

Strengthen connections between the Plaza, museums, library, and public art with year-round programming. Adapt historic buildings into active community spaces that preserve identity while bringing people downtown beyond weekends.

In October 2025, the City of Las Cruces and the project team convened a week-long public engagement process to shape the Downtown Master Plan Update. The effort included public workshops, walking tours, focused topic meetings, open studio hours, and a closing presentation, allowing residents, business owners, neighborhood representatives, and institutional partners to engage directly with emerging ideas and priorities.

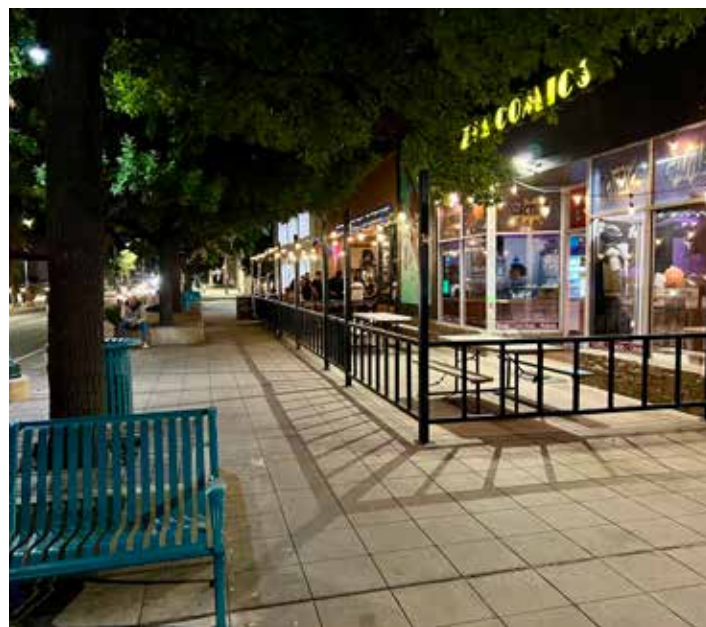
Across all formats, participants consistently identified what is working Downtown today: a walkable core, valued public spaces such as Plaza de Las Cruces and the neighborhood parks, and a growing sense of safety and local pride. At the same time, they named clear challenges that continue to limit Downtown’s everyday use, including insufficient shade, lighting, and amenities, incomplete connections to Mesquite and Alameda Depot, and a lack of housing and services that support daily life.

Community members repeatedly expressed pride in the progress made since the 2016 Downtown Master Plan, noting improvements to Main Street, public spaces, and overall perception, while also emphasizing that key commitments, particularly neighborhood connections and everyday amenities, remain unfinished. A strong theme throughout the charrette was a desire to move from vision to execution. Many participants noted that earlier plans had identified the right priorities, particularly reconnecting Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods, but that progress had been uneven. As a result, there was broad support for this update’s emphasis on focused actions and visible implementation rather than expansive or aspirational recommendations.

Participants also emphasized the importance of using City-controlled tools more strategically, including TIDD funding, public land, and infrastructure investment. There was strong interest in pilot projects and early wins that demonstrate feasibility, reduce private risk, and build momentum for reinvestment. Improved coordination across City departments and clearer communication about decision-making were identified as essential to making progress.

Fairness was woven throughout the dialogue. Community members spoke candidly about the lasting impacts of urban renewal and disinvestment, noting that these histories continue to shape access, mobility, and participation today. There was shared agreement that future Downtown investment should repair past disconnections, honor local history and culture, and benefit existing residents alongside new development.

Taken together, the community input reinforced a clear expectation: Downtown should function first as a complete neighborhood that supports daily life, while remaining flexible enough to host events, culture, and regional activity. The goals, actions, and catalyst projects in this Plan Update respond directly to that guidance. They are grounded in what the community shared, aligned with the Comp, and focused on what the City can realistically deliver over time.



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SHOP

The Music Box

D R A F T



C I T Y O F L A S C R U C E S , N E W M E X I C O



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