



Town Hall Albuquerque

A Discussion on the Proposed
Event Center and Hotel Complex

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The 173 Bernalillo County residents who attended **Town Hall Albuquerque: A Discussion on the Proposed Event Center and Hotel Complex**, held on July 17, 2008, have a vision. They want their Duke City—and especially the downtown area—to be vibrant, welcoming, and safe, providing authentic cultural and artistic characteristics unique to the region. Appealing to visitors and residents alike, they see Albuquerque as a premier destination, attracting both national and international attention. Focusing on sustainability, they want their city to benefit from improved infrastructure and solid career opportunities.

Differing opinions arise when residents from the Duke City and surrounding environs are asked how to create this vision. The underlying question for town hall participants was: should Albuquerque's immediate growth include an events center and hotel complex? Rather than answering this right away, however, participants created questions that would be used to inform a \$700,000 viability assessment. Recently approved by the City Council, this assessment will examine the potential benefits and impacts of such a development. Scheduled to be completed in the next four to six months, it will act as a foundation for future discussions as stakeholders dialogue about and ultimately decide on whether this proposed development is the best way to invest in Albuquerque's, and the region's, future.

The questions resulting from this town hall will be sent to: city officials, project leaders, the assessment team, the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau (which sponsored the event), business leaders, and other interested stakeholders.

Covering a wide range of interests, stakeholder groups included individuals representing:

- tribal issues
- development including new construction,
- governmental and education
- arts, culture, and special events
- community and environmental issues
- lodging and entertainment business
- retail, restaurant and other small businesses

Albuquerque Mayor Martin Chavez addressed the group. A number of dignitaries attended in an observer role including: State Representative Rick Miera, New Mexico Secretary of Economic Development Fred Mondragon, and several Albuquerque City Council members.

This town hall was facilitated by **New Mexico First**, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization co-founded in 1986 by U.S. Senators Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman. **New Mexico First** events bring together people from all walks of life to identify practical solutions to the state's toughest

problems. In **New Mexico First's** 22-year history, it has engaged over 8,000 people in the democratic process. The organization conducts an annual statewide town hall focusing on a critical issue facing the state and also facilitates specialized town halls and forums for communities and institutions that need consensus feedback. This event was a specialized forum conducted through a contract with the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Full Group's Top Priority Questions

The town hall participants were divided into six small discussion groups, which generated a total of almost 100 questions. Each group chose their three to four priority questions to bring to a full group session. All participants then selected their top priorities from those 21 questions, with the greatest degree of consensus centering on about a third of those questions. These seven questions are listed in this summary. However, the full list of questions is included in this report, and **New Mexico First** urges city leaders and the assessment team to consider the entire list.

1. How will the project benefit all of Albuquerque, what are the larger community, regional, and state impacts arising from this project?
2. Are we adequately planning to fully utilize the site with a mix of uses?
3. What is the financial benefit of the project to the region, the state or the city? Will the study define the criteria of success and performance metrics by ensuring it will be profitable for Albuquerque, assure that Albuquerque will have a sustainable, competitive advantage, and that Albuquerque will be in the top ten cities of its size with event centers?
4. What is the demand for this project and the anticipated and financial impact, both positive and negative, considering both today's and projected economic conditions and their impact on travel patterns?
5. How will this project out-compete all the other competing locations that tourists and groups have to choose from? How can this project incorporate Albuquerque regional and cultural characteristics and strengths, like the airport, to increase competitive advantage?
6. What is the economic impact if we don't do this project?
7. Can we have an autonomous, empirical, in-depth feasibility study that includes the cost of public safety, increased public transportation, arts, clean downtown, enough safety personnel beyond the immediate area (Rio Grande, Carlisle, Sunport, Menaul).

FULL REPORT

Town Hall Albuquerque

On Thursday, July 17th New Mexicans met to discuss the proposed event center and hotel complex. Sponsored by the **Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau** (ACVB), the goal of the event was to create a body of questions that would inform the \$700,000 viability assessment recently approved by the City Council. **New Mexico First's** focus in convening the event was to ensure a diverse representation of stakeholders, fair and balanced information about pros and cons potentially related to the project, and a process that would enable those present to consider the questions they need answered in order to determine if building the proposed event center and hotel complex would be of benefit to Albuquerque.

This report details the results of the town hall, including all questions generated by the six small discussion groups. It is being sent to city and project leaders, the development team, ACVB, and other interested stakeholders.

Proposed Event Center and Hotel Complex Specifics

The estimated cost of the proposed development, including the event center and headquarters hotel, is \$398¹ million. As it is currently proposed, the event center would have a 12,000 seat capacity and be located just north of Central and east of the railroad tracks. The proposed headquarters hotel, with 450+ rooms and up to 40,000 square feet of additional conference, ballroom, and general meeting space, would be located just west of the convention center, at Second and Tijeras NW. A city-funded viability assessment is underway and is scheduled to be completed in four to six months.

A background report containing additional details on the project is available at www.nmfirst.org. The background report was sent to town hall participants in advance of the event.

Thoughts on the Project²

Mayor Martin Chavez attended the town hall and offered words of encouragement about the proposed development: "There is no business growth unless business invests in

¹ "City of Albuquerque, New Mexico Event Center/Hotel Preliminary Finance Plan for Discussion" by RBC Capital Markets for the ABQ Downtown Development Team, 5/08

² All speaker quotes came from notes taken during the presentations by Master Recorder Ed Moreno.

itself. We are investing in ourselves and our opportunities and we must move quickly, intelligently, and deliberately."

For the morning panel, ACVB and New Mexico First secured seven individuals who represented multiple sides of the issue. Each panelist offered a brief presentation, and participants had the opportunity to ask questions.

Those in favor of the project included Bill Geist, President of Zeitgeist Consulting and author of *Albuquerque: What If... A White Paper on the Future of the Q's Downtown*; and Michael Gehrisch from Destination Marketing Association International. Using a home remodeling metaphor, Geist asked: "Do you focus on a lot of little projects, or one big project?" and answered: "Ultimately, it is the big, bold projects that capture private sector interest, letting investors know that it is safe to come back downtown." "There is an intense competitiveness among destinations," offered Gehrisch, and such a project not only caters to visitors but becomes "an amenity for local people to come downtown." His caution? "You have to have every element in place, including both the events center and hotel, before going forward."

Kate Krause, Associate Professor in the UNM Department of Economics and Maura Gast, Executive Director of the Irving Visitors Bureau, had encouragement *and* caution to share. "You shouldn't count on this project to provide benefits that exceed costs," said Krause. "Instead focus on the ripple effects and spinoffs. Anytime you see a proposal, ask yourself: what's the counter-factual? What if we didn't build this center? Do we have to go forward or will we be left behind? What if we spent this money elsewhere?" Gast shared what happened in Irving, Texas, in the wake of finding out that the Dallas Cowboy's were moving out. "We secured a new feasibility study, asking the question: if we had a \$100 million bonding capacity, what could we spend it on?" The answer included a "smaller, multi-purpose venue and the need for more restaurants."

A more cautionary note came from two individuals representing neighborhood interests: Rob Dickson, Vice President of EDo (East Downtown) Neighborhood Association and Steve Grant, President of the Historic Huning Highland Neighborhood Association. "What is it going to look like? Feel like? Who is behind this project? Will it be paid for in 30-40 years?" were some of the questions Dickson had. "My view," he said, "is that the best destinations are also the best places to live. If we make Albuquerque a great place for us, people will want to come here." Underscoring this point, Grant wanted to know how the proposed development would impact the surrounding neighborhoods, wondering "Will it be a good thing to live near this development? Or will it ultimately be bad, with no parking and lots of litter and noise pollution?"

Finally, Paul Gessing, President of the Rio Grande Foundation, shared outright concerns about the project.

Ultimately, he does not feel public funds should be used on projects of this nature. But if this does move forward, he questioned why downtown is the only location being considered. “The fairgrounds are under transition and Albuquerque Uptown is a successful retail and restaurant area.”

Participants’ Vision for the Duke City

Each of the six small discussion groups created their own vision for the city of Albuquerque (*located in the appendix*). The common themes that emerged among these statements included a City that is:

- Vibrant, welcoming and safe (especially the downtown area).
- Authentic culturally and artistically, based on regional characteristics.
- Appealing to visitors and residents alike.
- A premier destination, attracting both national and international attention.

Town Hall Questions

Emerging Themes

Just as the six vision statements overlapped in a variety of ways, themes emerged in the close to 100 questions generated by the small discussion groups.

When looking at the entire grouping of questions, however, it became clear—by virtue of sheer volume—that a main concern of participant’s was the financing/economic impact of the project. Participants wanted to know how the project would be paid for, what the projected economic impacts—both positive and negative—would be, and how those impacts would be determined. They also wanted more clarity as to the overall financial structure of the project—in terms of why it had to be a mix of public and private—and who would ultimately retain ownership.

Other themes included how the assessment itself would be conducted, specifically in ways that were fair and balanced. Participants wanted to see a transparent process that spoke to the highest interests of Albuquerque, the region, and the state.

Priority Questions

Questions considered to be top priority were chosen in the following manner: Each small discussion group generated their own set of questions, ultimately choosing the three or four that were their group’s personal priority. That process produced a list of 21 questions, which were then discussed

and compared by the full group. The greatest degree of consensus emerged around the top seven questions that were listed in the Executive Summary of this report. Listed below are all 21 questions with the top third in **bold**. All questions generated at the town hall, grouped into themes, directly follows this section.

Big Picture

1. How would the project be developed to be in keeping with the long-term master plan for downtown (if there is one) and that maintains the cultural character of the city?
2. Is there a long-term vision for the city of Albuquerque and how does this project fit that vision?
3. **How will the project benefit all of Albuquerque; what are the larger community, regional and state impacts arising from this project?**
4. Is this the highest/best use of investment money to vitalize downtown and re-invigorate tourism?

Scale

5. Are we thinking big enough for long-term viability?
6. **Are we adequately planning to fully utilize the site with a mix of uses?**

Process Nuts and Bolts

7. What is the realistic schedule for completing the project?
8. How will this project be approved? Council or referendum?

Financing

9. **What is the financial benefit of the project to the region, the state or the city? Will the study define the criteria of success and performance metrics by ensuring it will be profitable for Albuquerque, assure that Albuquerque will have a sustainable, competitive advantage, and that Albuquerque will be in the top ten cities of its size with event centers?**
10. **What is the demand for this project and the anticipated and financial impact, both positive and negative, considering both today’s and projected economic conditions and their impact on travel patterns?**
11. **How will this project out-compete all the other competing locations that tourists and groups have to choose from? How can this project incorporate Albuquerque regional and cultural characteristics and strengths, like the airport, to increase competitive advantage?**
12. Because of the requirement to balance the budget, what capital investments would be at risk in the city if this project gets funded and the bond limit is reduced for other projects?
13. **What is the economic impact if we don’t do this project?**

Transparency (of the process)

14. **Can we have an autonomous, empirical, in-depth feasibility study that includes the cost of public safety, increased public transportation, arts, clean downtown, enough safety personnel beyond the immediate area (Rio Grande, Carlisle, Sunport, Menaul).**
15. If the assessment team returns a positive report, will the city council of Albuquerque fulfill their responsibility and vote for this project?
16. What steps will the committee take to earn public trust and ensure accountability concerning hiring and corruption?
17. What steps are being taken to ensure the consultants are being truthful and unbiased?

Marketing

18. How can we ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to effectively market the project commensurate with its level of development?
19. Will the study be broad enough to get public support? What are the benefits for all stakeholders (arts, cultural, sports, renovation of Kiva or another performing arts center)?
20. How can we encourage the people of Albuquerque to feel ownership of the project?

Parking

21. What is the possibility of city-enforced residential permit parking in surrounding neighborhoods? Could underground parking be an option for this project? How will adequate parking be assured without impacting neighborhood street parking?

All Town Hall Questions

Following is the complete set of questions, grouped into themes. Minor editing was done to ensure the readability and understanding of each question. When similar questions emerged among the groups they were combined, with the original questions offered in footnotes. Because economic impact/financing made up such a large number of questions, subcategories were offered with a "\$" in front of each subcategory to denote they were part of the larger economic impact/financing theme.

Big Picture

- How will the project benefit all of Albuquerque? What are the larger community, regional and state impacts arising from the project?
- Is there a long term vision for the city of Albuquerque and/or a long-term master plan for Downtown? If either or both of these plans exist, how does this project fit into either or both of those visions? And how will the project be

developed in ways that maintain the cultural character of the City?³

- Should Albuquerque have a vibrant, viable downtown?
- Will the final development of downtown reflect the essence of our cultural heritage?
- Is this the highest/best use of investment money to vitalize downtown and re-invigorate tourism?
- Is there state support for the project?
- Can this project be presented as a joint city, county, and state effort?
- Who will own/control different aspects of the project, the citizens of Albuquerque or other entities? Will the event center be owned/managed by the City? If so, will there be a community oversight board?⁴
- What is your plan "B"?
- If any one portion of the project does not prove viable, will the rest of the project go forward?
- Will there be a commitment for public art funding to proportionally match the scale of the project?

Scale

- Are we adequately planning to fully utilize the site with a mix of uses?
- Are we thinking big enough for long-term viability?

Process Nuts and Bolts

- What is the realistic schedule for completing the project?⁵
- How will this project be approved? Council or referendum⁶

Financing/Economic Impact

Economic Impact:

³ This question combines the yellow group's: Is there a long-term vision for the city of Albuquerque and how does this project fit that vision? And the orange group's: How would the project be developed to be in keeping with the long-term master plan for downtown (if there is one) and that maintains the cultural character of the city?

⁴ This question combines blue group's questions: Who has control of the project, the citizens of Albuquerque or other entities?

Who will own the different aspects of the project? And yellow group's: Will the event center be owned/managed by the City? If so, will there be a community oversight board?

⁵ This question was the same as yellow's: What is the specific time frame for this all to happen? So only one was included.

⁶ This question includes the yellow group's question: Will the project have to go to the public for a vote?

- What is the economic impact this development will have on the region's, state's and City's economy? How many jobs will be created? What will the average wages of those jobs be? How much Gross Receipts Tax will be generated?⁷ Will the study define the criteria of success and performance metrics by ensuring it will be profitable for Albuquerque, assure that Albuquerque will have a sustainable, competitive advantage, and that Albuquerque will be in the top ten cities of its size with event centers?
- How would this project increase the average daily rate of existing lodging, and what does that mean economically?
- What comps will you use to determine revenue projections and percentage sellout?
- What is the indirect benefit, economically, to the community?
- What additional, indirect revenue streams, aside from convention business, will contribute to the market?
- What are the economic impacts for Downtown, Old Town, Baretas, University, and Nob Hill business districts?
- What are the incremental or additional private investments that will occur because of this public investment?
- How would this project diversify our nighttime economy and some of the issues that are associated with it?
- What is the demand for this project and the anticipated and financial impact, both positive and negative, considering both today's and projected economic conditions and their impact on travel patterns?
- How will this project out-compete all the other competing locations that tourists and groups have to choose from? How can this project incorporate Albuquerque regional and cultural characteristics and strengths, like the airport, to increase competitive advantage?

Contingencies/Costs to Consider

- What contingencies will be included in the project to deal with high cost overruns to prevent minimizing any aspect of the project so that we do it right?

⁷ This question combines the orange group's: *What is the financial benefit of the project to the region, the state and the City?* And yellow group's: *What is the economic impact this development will have on Albuquerque/the State's economy? How many jobs will be created? What will the average wages of those jobs be? How much GRT will be generated?*

- What costs need to be considered for capacity building (staff, security)?
- What are the indirect costs to the community on this project (e.g. sewer, water, electrical and other infrastructure, noise barriers, etc.)? Does handling these indirect costs on this project help future development (by taking some of the financial burden off of those future developments by handling some of the infrastructure now)?
- What improvements to existing infrastructure (sewer, water, power) will be included in the project? Will infrastructure be expanded to accommodate the proposed development as well as the surrounding area?⁸

Financing/Project Structure/Investment

- Do all of the components need to be financed together and how will the financing be split between the public and private sectors?
- How is this project being financed? Will a 1/8th Gross Receipts Tax allocation really cover the public sector costs?⁹
- Why does this project require a public/private partnership as opposed to just a private investment?¹⁰
- What needs to happen (type, number of events) to make the project break even so additional revenues are not siphoned off from taxpayers?
- Will there be any private sector capital investment in the hotel or event center?
- What financial support will be necessary from public, governmental entities and private investors to secure a financial plan?
- What are the taxpayers willing to pay?
- Would City leaders consider bifurcation of the project financing to allow private, including Native American, investment in the hotel?
- What is the potential deficit of operations and who will pay for it?

⁸ This question combines the blue group's: *What improvements to existing infrastructure and/or new structure will be included in the project?* And the orange group's: *Will infrastructure (sewer, water, power) be expanded to accommodate the proposed facilities as well as the surrounding area?*

⁹ This question combines the blue group's: *How is this project being financed? Can the project be delivered within the scope of the 1/8th percent Gross Receipts Tax?* And the brown group's: *Will a 1/8th Gross Receipts Tax allocation really cover the public sector costs?*

¹⁰ This question combines the brown group's: *Why does this project have to be a public/private partnership versus just a private investment?* And the orange group's: *Why does this project require a public/private investment as opposed to all private?*

- Because of the requirement to balance the budget, what capital investments would be at risk in the city if this project gets funded and the bond limit is reduced for other projects?
- How can you increase your rate of return without government subsidies (ie. Bonds)?

Impact if Project isn't Done

- Some say there are better ways to generate economic growth, what is the alternative?
- What is the economic impact if we don't do this project?
- By taking no action on the project, what do we lose as a community?

Transparency (of the process)

- Can we have an autonomous, empirical, in-depth feasibility study that includes the cost of public safety, increased public transportation, arts, clean downtown, enough safety personnel beyond the immediate area (Rio Grande, Carlisle, Sunport, Menaul).
- If the assessment team returns a positive report, will the city council of Albuquerque fulfill their responsibility and vote for this project?
- What steps will the assessment team take to earn public trust and ensure accountability concerning hiring and corruption?
- What steps are being taken to ensure the consultants are being truthful and unbiased?
- How do you intend to allay or mitigate tax payers concerns, given a perceived conflict of interest with the development team being both the viability assessment contractor and the project developer—particularly if the developers have no equity or financial risk in the development?
- What have other communities done to make this kind of project less susceptible to unrelated political agendas?

Assessment

- Will the report quantify positive and negative impacts of the current investments (infrastructure such as mass transit, public/private parking, existing convention center, etc.) and present an effective overall return on investment?
- Will the renovation of the existing convention center be considered in the feasibility study?

Event Center/Hotel Specific

- What are the pros and cons of building a new event venue on this site as opposed to building, expanding, or maintaining venues at other locations in Albuquerque or elsewhere in the area?

- Is it true that, were another event center built during this decision-making process, it will close a window of opportunity?
- Will this event center kill the journal center? Is there enough business for everybody?
- Who will be managing the event center and the hotel after they are built?
- Re: the event center: What is the projected usage? What kinds of events and how many event days sold are anticipated? What is the intended tenant base? What is the anticipated usage by tourists versus locals?¹¹
- Are the hotel and event center inextricably intertwined? Is there a requirement that they be co-located? Can you do one without the other, and which would take priority?¹²
- Would you consider another site location for the event center, and if so, where?
- What are the best practices and failures of other similar projects within the past five years?
- Give us examples of other successful hotel/event centers that have been publicly financed.
- Will the assessment team assure that the hotel is properly sized?
- How many hotel room nights sold per year are anticipated because of the event center?

Marketing

- How can we ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to effectively market the project commensurate with its level of development?
- Will the viability assessment be broad enough to get public support? What are the benefits for all stakeholders (arts, cultural, sports, renovation of Kiva or another performing arts center)?
- How can we encourage the people of Albuquerque to feel ownership of the project?
- Who within the City organization would lead the public education component associated with this project; what

¹¹ This question combines yellow group's: What is the projected usage of the event center? What kinds of events and how many are anticipated? What is the anticipated usage of the center by tourists versus locals? And orange group's: What is the intended tenant base for the event center? What varieties of uses are anticipated and how many event days sold are anticipated?

¹² This question combines orange group's: Is there a requirement that the hotel and event center be co-located? Why not consider developing these independently? And the following blue group questions: Are the hotel and the event center inextricably intertwined? Can you do a hotel without an event center? Can you do the event center without the hotel? Can you have one without the other and which takes priority?

are the critical elements of a political and public marketing strategy?

Infrastructure & Neighborhood Impact/Parking

- What is the possibility of city-enforced residential permit parking in surrounding neighborhoods? Could underground parking be an option for this project? How will adequate parking be assured without impacting neighborhood street parking?
- How will this project affect surrounding neighborhoods in both a positive and negative way?¹³
- How do we protect the authenticity of the surrounding areas and preserve community identity?¹⁴
- What are your strategies for mitigating the traffic impact (interstate, boulevards, etc.)?¹⁵
- How will we enforce and mitigate parking, noise, and light pollution?
- What type of increased security presence is planned, if any, for this project?

Energy/Green Issues

- Will the assessment consider energy issues and their effects on travel and tourism, both positive and negative?
- What will be the environmental impact (trash, water usage, etc.) of this project in the area?
- What is the “green” plan?
- Will this be a green building?

Wrap-up/Next Steps

The viability assessment is slated to be completed in the next four to six months. Information from the assessment will be made available by the city. The hope is for the assessment to provide the facts necessary to determine whether the proposed events center and hotel complex is the best way to help secure Albuquerque’s and the region’s economic viability well into the future.

¹³ This and the following two questions combine yellow group’s: What are your strategies for mitigating the traffic impact? Green group questions: What actions will be required to improve and handle the additional traffic in this area (interstate, boulevards, etc.)? How do we protect the authenticity of the surrounding areas affected by the increased traffic in and around these areas? How will community identity be preserved? How will this project affect surrounding neighborhoods in both a positive and negative way? And brown group’s: What will be the parking, traffic, and other intrusions in the surrounding neighborhoods?

¹⁴ See footnote #11

¹⁵ See footnote #11

Appendix

Small Discussion Group Vision Statements

Yellow Group Vision Statement:

Albuquerque in five years will have a vibrant, welcoming, environmentally friendly (noise, lights), safe downtown that preserves and promotes our artistic multi-cultural heritage. It will consist of architecture that reflects the personality of the community and high quality public transportation. Downtown Albuquerque will be a multi-generational, accessible, citizen oriented neighborhood that is pedestrian friendly. Security and safety will be a main focus of the city and/ or private business. Citizens of Albuquerque will be proud of the city, which will be a national and international destination.

Orange Group Vision Statement:

In 2013, Albuquerque would be friendly, safe, affordable, walkable, and vibrant, especially in the downtown area. The city would offer new work and live opportunities while building on or retaining its current authentic cultural and artistic characteristics. Accessibility of all areas of the city would be fluid, easy and free where possible. People who would come to Albuquerque might include those who would not have considered coming here before, and would include a greater international ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. People of all ages would stay here to work and invest their energy and ideas. We imagine cultural, sporting, and other entertainment opportunities -- including those that center on education and kids -- and position Albuquerque as a regional destination for New Mexico. Such events would cater to a variety of tastes and demographics, including sophisticated arts and cultural programs.

Brown Group Vision Statement:

It's 2013 and Albuquerque has more than a million residents. Albuquerque is confident about its future. Downtown is vibrant, fun, and attractive for residents and visitors alike. Albuquerque is considered one of the best places to live, not only in the west, but in the entire country. Albuquerque is on the cutting edge of sustainable building and land development. Kids growing up in Albuquerque don't have to leave to find good jobs. They stay not only because our economy is focused on attracting good jobs, but also because the downtown is vibrant and adds value to the city as a whole. The mayor and city council work together.

Red Group Vision Statement:

Albuquerque will be a uniquely vibrant and safe city that combines art, technology, and culture to attract both national and international attention. Albuquerque provides professional jobs and drives regional economic growth by attracting the creative class (reference: Richard Florida) and providing quality education to its children.

Blue Group Vision Statement:

In 2013, Albuquerque is an example of how a city has made the most of its opportunities and has redefined "quality of life" to mean improved infrastructure, amenities, and services. A "sense of place" has been created in the downtown, a transportation system connects all parts of the city, and mixed use, transportation-friendly developments have sprung up all around the city. A broad mix of arts and cultural happenings reflect Albuquerque's unique heritage. Consequently, Albuquerque is now able to attract large (more than 2,000 people) conventions and is as competitive as the city was in the mid-nineties.

Green Group Vision Statement:

In the year 2013, Albuquerque has a vibrant sustainable, environmentally sensitive economy. All neighborhoods share in the success due to the economic impact of its downtown district which provides authentic cultural and business opportunities. The vibrant economy has built a first class educational system and the increase in business activity has led to career and community opportunities for Albuquerque's youth. Albuquerque citizens enjoy a quality of life which includes some of the lowest poverty levels nationwide and a rich cultural appreciation. The global community views Albuquerque as a premier destination for leisure and business travelers.