PROJECT DATA

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Project Name: Magnifico Artspace in Urban Arts Renewal Location: Albuquerque, NM

Owner: Magnifico Arts Incorporated

Project Use(s): To provide an arts anchor for downtown revitalization and leadership for the creation of the downtown arts district

Project Size: Magnifico Artspace is 5,500 s.f.; the revitalization project extends throughout the entire downtown/historic district

Total Development Cost: N/A Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate): $329,000

Date Initiated: May 1999 (Magnifico was incorporated in 1991) Percent Completed by December 1, 2002: N/A

Project Completion Date (if appropriate): Ongoing

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates: See attached exhibit schedule

Application submitted by:

Name: Suzanne Sbarge Title: Executive Director

Organization: Magnifico Arts Incorporated

Address: 516 Central SW City/State/Zip: Albuquerque, NM 87102

Telephone: (505) 242-8244 Fax: (505) 242-0174

E-Mail: Suzanne@Magnifico.org Weekend Contact Number (for notification): (505) 877-8310

Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed)

Organization

Public Agencies: City of Albuquerque Public Art Program, Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque Public Schools, City Community Centers

Architect/Designer: Mark Rohde, AIA (board member; consults on design issues, participated in Charette); Tony Evanko (shows his work at 516 Magnifico Artspace, and consults on design issues, participated in Charette); Chris Calott (led the Central Arts District Design Charette)

Professional Consultant: Tom Levine of Empower Development, Inc.; Toby Herzlich

Community Groups: Downtown Action Team, Historic District Improvement Company, Fort 105 Studios and Gallery, Harwood Arts Center

Other:

Please indicate how you learned of the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. (Check all that apply).

Direct Mailing Magazine Advertisement Previous RBA entrant Other (Please specify)

Professional Newsletter Previous Selection Committee member

Organization Magazine Calendar

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Signature: Suzanne Sbarge
ABSTRACT

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Project Name: Magnifico Artspace in Urban Arts Renewal

Address: 516 Central, SW
City/State/ZIP: Albuquerque, NM 87102

1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals.

Magnifico Arts Incorporated was founded in 1991 to present a once-a-year city-wide arts festival. As the city of Albuquerque has evolved, so has Magnifico. Over the years, the organization expanded its activities to include year-round arts activities and educational programs, and to provide leadership for arts promotion in Albuquerque. Its mission gradually became “Magnifico is an urban center for the arts providing education and innovative programs that reflect diversity, collaboration, and contemporary relevance.”

In 1999, Magnifico opened its own gallery, called 516 Magnifico Artspace, in the heart of Albuquerque’s emerging downtown district. This centrally located, free gallery offers year-round exhibitions of contemporary art in a variety of media, primarily by New Mexico artists, enabling city-dwellers, families, schoolchildren, and tourists to experience the diversity and richness of our culture. At that time, the board and staff of Magnifico made a commitment to be a leader in making Albuquerque’s deteriorated downtown area once again a vibrant, creative, and desirable place to be. 516 Magnifico Artspace has successfully developed into a gathering place for artists, an education center for young people, and a clearinghouse for information about the blossoming arts scene in downtown Albuquerque.

Revitalization is a dynamic, ongoing process that is never completed. Similarly, “the arts”—especially in a city with as much diversity and history as Albuquerque—encompass a wide variety of projects, ideas, and events that grow, change, and expand over time. Although Magnifico has achieved several significant milestones, its work in the downtown area will continue to be fresh, creative, and necessary for many years to come. Magnifico’s ongoing goals are to ensure:

- That artists have spaces to work and to exhibit their art in and around downtown;
- That art of the highest quality, in all media, is accessible to the public;
- That other like-minded organizations have the resources, communication, and creative stimulation they need to make their own contributions to the revitalization effort;
- That area residents and visitors are well-informed about the opportunities and events downtown; and
- That the arts-based revitalization continues to thrive well into the future. (To this end, Magnifico is working with the Historic District Improvement Company to create an arts district trust to maintain affordability for the arts downtown.)

2. Why does the project merit the Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.)

By producing high-quality art exhibits and programs in its anchor site in the heart of Albuquerque’s downtown district; by facilitating communication among artists, arts organizations, public agencies, and audiences of all kinds; by developing collaborative advertising projects; by managing extensive outreach and education programs benefiting Albuquerque’s at-risk young people; and by providing leadership in myriad ways, Magnifico Arts Incorporated is actively and successfully engaged in harnessing the power of the arts in the service of Albuquerque’s much-needed downtown revitalization.

Some recent accomplishments:

- In 2001, Magnifico sponsored a Design Charette, in which 600 community members, including architects, designers, artists, and real estate developers, worked together to envision the future of a downtown arts district.
- As a result, we have seen many new studios, art galleries, and commercial businesses open in the downtown area in the past year and a half, generating more art, more traffic, more tourism, and more income for all involved.
- Magnifico has just produced the first Central Arts District Guide, to support and publicize all downtown arts activities.
- More than 50 groups of at-risk young people now come to 516 Magnifico Artspace each year for “Art Tours,” in which they see professional works of art, meet working artists, and create original artwork of their own.

Some recent evidence of our success:

- National Public Radio recently featured a Magnifico exhibit on “Living on Earth,” a national program.
- American Style magazine named Albuquerque as one of its ten “Great Arts Places.”
- Magnifico has approximately 200 volunteers from the community, ranging in age from 14 to 75.
- The City of Albuquerque named Magnifico the city’s official “Designated Arts Organization.”
- The New Mexico Department of Tourism awarded Magnifico a grant to support advertising in national art magazines.
PROJECT DATA

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Percent Completed by December 1, 2002: N/A

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Application submitted by:

Name: Suzanne Sbarge
Title: Executive Director

Organization: Magnifico Arts Incorporated

Address: 516 Central SW
City/State/Zip: Albuquerque, NM 87102

Telephone: (505) 242-8244
Fax: (505) 242-0174

E-Mail: Suzanne@Magnifico.org
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Signature

Suzanne Sbarge
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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1. How has the project impacted the local community?

Following the Design Charette sponsored by Magnifico in the spring of 2001 (see #3), more than a dozen new artists’ studios have opened downtown, as have several new art galleries and small arts boutiques. Inspired by the momentum of the charette, OFFCenter Community Art Project opened its doors nearby, offering arts programs for the homeless and “outsider artists.” And Fort 105 opened a second site (Fort 508) with multiple artists’ studios. Commercial development has grown dramatically as well, with a new 14-screen movie theater and several new restaurants opening downtown in the past year. The developers are currently working on finding a way to channel some of the profit from those ventures into the arts so that the cycle of renewal can continue.

Information and communication are an integral part of urban revitalization. In order to get the word out about all that is happening in downtown Albuquerque and encourage families, artists, and visitors to come see for themselves, Magnifico is producing semi-annual Central Arts District Guides this year. The Guides showcase current downtown arts activities and the progress on the revitalization efforts, thereby helping the public continue to envision a central Downtown Arts District while participating in the many thriving arts activities already there.

These guides have three major goals:

a) To provide essential information about what is going on in the visual, performing, and literary arts;

b) To keep everyone in the community involved, informed, and enthusiastic about the revitalization project;

c) To serve as a guide for tourists, making them aware of all that is going on in the rich cultural life of Albuquerque, encouraging them to visit the city, and helping them make the most of their time here.

More than 30 arts venues are located in the downtown/historic district, but most operate independently, with narrow missions, and on limited budgets. Magnifico, which has the broad mission of serving the district as a whole, is the only organization serving as a leader, publicizing the events of all organizations, and striving to create a cohesive image of the district.

2. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

The underlying goal of Magnifico is to revitalize downtown Albuquerque, to make it a vibrant, creative, interesting, and culturally diverse place to live, work, and visit. To this end, there are three main aspects to our work:

1) We curate the highest quality art exhibits possible, seeking out and displaying work by the best local and regional artists in all media.

2) We foster interaction among the artists, the public, and the artwork by:

a. Actively promoting exhibits to the population of Albuquerque and New Mexico;

b. Advertising in local, regional, and national publications to help gain wider recognition for the artists involved and to build Albuquerque’s reputation as a center for cultural tourism;

c. Bringing young people to Magnifico exhibits from area schools and community centers and providing hands-on art activities for them in addition to gallery tours and artist talks;

d. Scheduling special events and activities to attract visitors who do not normally attend art exhibits.

3) We actively engage in community-building activities in the downtown area that:

a. Foster collaboration among organizations to create and expand artistic activities downtown;

b. Offer information to artists, designers, and developers to encourage them to work downtown;

c. Providing much-needed publicity at no cost to other organizations in the downtown area through joint promotional activities.

The major trade-off we face is the desire to apply our limited resources and staff time to the vast undertaking of developing a thriving downtown arts scene while not neglecting our core work as a contemporary urban arts center. We hope to find additional sources of funding for our operating expenses so that we can add administrative staff, enabling us to focus more energy on the issues of downtown in the coming years.
3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

Community participation has always been a crucial part of Magnifico’s mission. We collaborate with the City of Albuquerque, the Albuquerque Public Schools, community centers, real estate developers, designers, architects, artists, and arts organizations of all kinds in the effort to improve our city by harnessing the power of the arts.

In partnership with the City’s Public Arts Program, Magnifico is producing the Downtown Window on the Arts, a digital electronic display of arts and information which has never before been done in the state of NM. In addition, Magnifico has partnered with the Downtown Action Team to produce two years of the highly successful Downtown Studio Tour and Exhibit.

One of our most comprehensive and successful community-building activities downtown has been the Design Charette held in the spring of 2001. This charette was held in response to a citywide call for an economic, cultural, and residential revitalization of the Downtown area. Eleven arts organizations teamed with architects and designers to explore concepts and designs for occupying currently empty downtown buildings. More than 600 community members participated in all, creating drawings and models of their visions for downtown. Since that time, several of the participating organizations have launched or expanded their downtown projects based on the charette.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

Magnifico Arts Incorporated receives funding from a variety of public and private sources. In recognition of Magnifico’s work in the downtown revitalization effort, the Historic District Improvement Company (a for-profit real estate development firm) provides Magnifico with 5,500-square feet of gallery space and administrative offices in the heart of the downtown area at a price significantly below the market rate; this reduced rental is an effective contribution of more than $30,000 annually. The National Endowment for the Arts recently awarded Magnifico $10,000 to support the first two editions of the semi-annual Central Arts District Guides, through which we provide comprehensive publicity about arts events and exhibits downtown.

The McCune Charitable Foundation has supported Magnifico’s general operating expenses with grants of $12,000 per year for the past two years. The FUNd at the Albuquerque Community Foundation has given $20,000 per year for three years to help support Magnifico’s contemporary art exhibits. Albuquerque’s Department of Family and Community Services provided $56,400 in 2002, and the City of Albuquerque Urban Enhancement Trust Fund has promised $19,000 per year for two years.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

This project addresses significant urban issues facing Albuquerque and many other cities. As New Mexico’s largest city (500,000 people), Albuquerque has a rich heritage of people from very different cultures living together and sharing their history, their art, and their lives. However, in recent eras the population of the city has spread far into the outlying areas, causing a diffusion and isolation of artists, audiences, and the cultural forces that inspire them. For the arts to thrive, and for our various cultures to continue to inform and enrich one another, there must be central meeting places; convenient, appropriate venues for performance and display; and forums for communication. Neil Peirce of the Washington Post Writers Group recently wrote that “We need strong center cities . . . We’re in an age of anomic, placelessness, gated community exclusion, rootless TV-land and cyberspace. More than ever, the downtown serves as the common ground and meeting space for our sprawling citistates’ classes and races and cultures.” For these reasons, we believe the downtown arts district, and all that Magnifico is doing to develop and enhance it, are crucial to the future of our city.

New Mexico ranks forty-eighth among the fifty states in per capita income. Albuquerque’s most recent Human Services Needs Assessment (1996) showed that the downtown area neighborhoods were low-income, under-served areas with the highest poverty rate (33%) and the highest unemployment rate (13%) in the city.

That we have already made impressive progress in combating these trends is obvious from Richard Florida’s ground-breaking new book (2002), The Rise of the Creative Class, which names Albuquerque “the number one creative city of its size” in the country. He states that the arts in downtown Albuquerque will play a key role in Albuquerque’s economic development by attracting creative people and businesses to our city.

We have learned valuable lessons about the power of the arts from studying other cities that were able to transform their centers, and we hope that other American cities will adopt some of the methods of Magnifico by establishing high-quality art centers in downtown areas, by working with artists and other arts organizations to ensure that there is a critical mass of creative activity in our town centers, by producing and publicizing events that appeal to residents and tourists, and by facilitating widespread communication and cooperation.
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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

**Name** George R. "Pat" Bryan, III  
**Title** Chief Operating Officer

**Organization** Historic District Improvement Co.  
**Telephone** (505) 242-6922

**Address** 115 Gold Ave., S.W., #205  
**City/State/ZIP** Albuquerque, N.M. 87102

**Fax** (505) 242-6934  
**E-mail** pat@bryanflynnobrien.com

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**Signature**

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

I am both the Vice President of the Downtown Action Team, the non-profit dedicated to revitalization of our downtown core (DAT) and the Chief Operating Officer of the Historic District Improvement Company, downtown Albuquerque’s catalytic developer (HDIC).

Part of the strategic plan to revitalize downtown Albuquerque spearheaded by DAT involved the creation of an active arts (performing & visual) presence in downtown. DAT (which represents downtown’s business and civic leaders) has worked closely with Magnifico to create that active arts presence and to create a concentration of art activities downtown (the Central Arts District).

HDIC, which represents the merger of a for-profit development company (Arcadia Land Company) with a non-profit charitable foundation (the McCune Charitable Foundation) actually purchased the 516 Magnifico Artspace and wrote down the rent to allow Magnifico to maintain a real presence on our Mainstreet (Central Avenue, the old “Route 66”) and to recruit other art related activities back to downtown.

2. From the community viewpoint, what were the major issues concerning this project?

The major issue facing this effort was how not only to attract the arts downtown as part of our revitalization strategy, but how to insure a viable arts presence as our revitalization efforts are successful and rents rise. In addition, we needed to present visual and performing arts in an attractive, first class venue in new and exciting ways to draw people back downtown.

Not only has Magnifico successfully created a year-round adventurous art program that is free to the public, but HDIC, DAT and Magnifico have collaborated on such exciting programs as an arts charette to begin the creation of our Central Arts District and an annual Studio Tour featuring a huge range of artists living and working in and around downtown. HDIC and Magnifico have also cooperated on a “Downtown Window on the Arts” which features rotating art pieces in a commercial show window on Central Avenue.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

Perhaps the most difficult trade-offs and compromises have resulted from the charette which created immense expectations – some unrealistic - about what assistance might be possible in attracting artists and various art venues downtown as part of the “Central Arts District”.

HDIC, DAT and Magnifico are presently working with the Enterprise Foundation and the Ford Foundation to create a new non-profit to support affordable housing, small business ventures and the arts. That process has been slow and tedious, but we are indeed hopeful that this effort will be a national model for how an arts community can maintain a permanent presence in a revitalized downtown.
4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

Our joint efforts have had a profound impact on our community. Downtown Albuquerque just four years ago was abandoned after 5:00 p.m. Now restaurants, clubs, and entertainment venues are flourishing. Art-related activities are drawing people downtown and creating a new energy in our downtown. The heart of our community is coming back - and the arts are playing a vital part in that resurrection.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

As I pointed out in #3, I believe our charrette raised unrealistic expectations. I would have been more cautious about raising expectations too early in the process.
PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name: Gordon M. Church
Title: Public Art Program Manager
Organization: City of Albuquerque
Telephone: (505) 768-3833
Address: P.O. Box 1293
City/State/ZIP: Albuquerque, NM 87103
Fax (505) 768-2310
E-mail: gchurch@cabq.gov

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Signature: Gordon M. Church

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

Magnifico Artspace 516 was developed as an adjunct to Albuquerque’s Convention and Visitors’ Bureau in 1991 to bring the arts into a focused marketing tool for the continued development of tourism; Magnifico was initially focused on developing an arts festival with performances, artist studio visits, tours, etc. The Public Art Program of the City of Albuquerque was an early participant and, as Program Manager, I began serving on Magnifico’s Visual Arts Committee to develop the annual Art of Albuquerque exhibit of local artists which is now held in the City’s Museum of Art and History (the Albuquerque Museum). Public Art Program staff members now rotate on this Committee to continue the Program’s participation. Magnifico also applied for and received City arts/cultural services trust fund awards for presenting this exhibit as well as a variety of other arts services including workshops at community centers and performances in the Downtown area.

The Public Art Program administers the public application for and the contracts for the receipt of these trust funds. In 1997, Magnifico was designated by City Council action as the arts agency for the City to provide a range of services, including additional efforts to develop a local arts festival. I participated in the selection of the new executive director (Suzanne Sbarge) for the agency, and we continued to work with the agency as it acquired a building for exhibits, performances, and administration. The Public Art Program and the City continue to be supporters of Magnifico’s efforts in city arts community-building and Downtown development; our staff has participated in many activities at Magnifico, including design charrettes and meetings about the development of a Downtown arts district. At this time, the Public Art Program and the Albuquerque Arts Board are developing an exciting new public art project which will result in the presentation of various art media through electronic means (on plasma screens in Downtown Albuquerque). Magnifico will manage this effort under contract to the City’s Public Art Program.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

Magnifico Artspace 516 is result of the energies of the Magnifico board and staff as well as broad-based community support developed through many years of activity. Over the past fifteen years, the long-desired revitalization of Downtown Albuquerque has proceeded slowly—until the late ’90’s when a local, private sector agency was reconstituted and substantially funded to increase the pace of redevelopment. The participation of the arts-oriented McCune Charitable Foundation in this redevelopment underscored the role of the arts in revitalization, and Magnifico was the obvious partner to further the role of the arts and artists in this project. Magnifico and those of us concerned with the agency understand the trade-off of being less focused on arts festival development (which was Magnifico’s original purpose) and more focused on the revitalization of our urban core. Having worked closely...
with Magnifico and having provided funding to Magnifico, we clearly understand that all reasonable effort was made to develop a festival for Albuquerque, but interested organizations including the local university were not able to fulfill their roles in that process. However, the meaningful role of an urban arts agency in the context of private and public sector partners actively redeveloping Downtown Albuquerque is a strategic step for increasing the role of the arts in Albuquerque in which synergy is a reality and not a "hoped for" possibility.

3. Describe the project's impact on our community. Please be as specific as possible.

516 Magnifico Artspace has become the leading arts agency in our city with a focus on contemporary art and related public outreach. As such, it has galvanized the artists and audience for contemporary art and has given both a series of events for experiencing the art, for learning about the art and for the networking of like-minds that such events encourage. And its done in a comfortable and accessible space, open to all, but with particular appeal to younger emerging artists and members of the public. Engaging these younger artists and audiences is a result of the location of Magnifico in the Downtown—an area which is following a standard revitalization scenario, beginning with younger residents who live and/or work in the Downtown and/or those visiting the Downtown to explore the lifestyle and nightlife-style it offers. Magnifico's presence is also stimulating the interest of artists and entrepreneurs in developing additional art/culture focused amenities such as artist studios and galleries, e.g., Fort 105 Studios, Gallery and Art Store. Early this year, Magnifico approached the Public Art Program with the Downtown Window on the Arts idea which we hope to implement early in 2003 to give artists another venue for expression, an electronic window to further the Downtown as the "center" for the arts.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

The Downtown Window on the Arts project is and will be a model partnership worthy of emulation. The Public Art Program will fund the acquisition of the hardware for the window display including computer, software and plasma screens; Magnifico will manage the programming of the display. The programming in turn will require an open public process for submission of visual materials in a variety of media and the translation of these various media into the format required for display. The Public Art Program can fund the hardware and the initial years of programming although we hope that on-going programming costs can be covered through other funding. Public art programs across the country usually having similar funding restraints and resources with regard to on-going programming for public artworks; Magnifico is the partner to make the programming a reality for us.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

The most successful aspect of 516 Magnifico Artspace is that it is a vibrant home for contemporary art and information, available to the public at no cost; this success has allowed the organization, staff and board to be leaders in the arts community. Secondly, Magnifico is an increasingly successful "sparkplug" in the revitalization of Downtown Albuquerque. Thirdly, of importance to the City of Albuquerque, is to have this successful organization as a designated non-profit agency serving the City's arts needs and thereby bridging the City to its arts-interested public.

As to the least successful aspect, an easy answer, it's not growing fast enough. There is much to do and with a challenging economy, there has not been enough funding available from the public sector or the private sector to allow this fine organization to do "more" of the quality and diversity they are already doing.
DEVELOPER PERSPECTIVE

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by the person who took primary responsibility for project financing or is a representative of the group which did.

Name Christopher B. Leinberger  Title Managing Partner
Organization Historic District Improvement Company  Telephone (505) 988-7600
Address 115 Gold Avenue #205  City/State/ZIP Albuquerque, NM 87102
Fax (505) 988-7476  E-mail HDIC@arcadialand.com

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Signature 12/16/02

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement.

The Historic District Improvement Company (HDIC) is the “catalytic” development company for the revitalization of downtown Albuquerque. Our role is to take above market risks to spur private sector development in a downtown that had not seen a private sector building permit in 15 years. HDIC has $150 million in development projects either complete, about to begin or under development in downtown. Completed projects include a 110,000 square foot mixed-use project which includes a 14-screen movie theater, retail and office, supported by a 630 car garage and a 40,000 square foot nightclub/office mixed use project. We are about to begin a 174-unit rental apartment development and a 41-unit for-sale loft project, each with significant ground floor retail.

HDIC also owns Magnifico’s building, maintaining them in the building at below-market rent. We are also working with the Enterprise, Ford and McCune Foundations to create the Downtown Albuquerque Civic Trust. The Trust will provide affordable housing in downtown and assist in building and maintaining the Central Arts District, working closely with Magnifico and using Magnifico as the anchor to the district. The Trust will be funded by profits generated by HDIC projects in downtown.

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project?

There is a recognition that the Civic Trust can not solve all social problems...that it must focus its attention to be successful. Also, that the Trust in its work to build the Central Arts District should focus on acquiring assets at modest prices available now and not on one-time subsidies for arts organizations.

3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used?

We are funding the project based upon the success of the redevelopment of downtown. In other words, as the downtown is more successful and in essence there is gentrification, there will be more money available for the Civic Trust and the Central Arts District. Gentrification will be paying for affordable housing and the arts.

Equally importantly is raising loan funds, hopefully provided by foundation PRI’s, to initially capitalize the Civic Trust and the Central Arts District. By pledging future profits from HDIC projects, these loans will be paid back, however, the funds will be available now, prior to the rising property and land values that revitalizing downtowns experience. If we waited until the profits were available, probably starting in 5-6 years, the cost of addressing the affordable housing needs and maintaining the arts in downtown would be much more difficult.
4. How did the economic impacts of this project on the community compare with or differ from other projects you have been involved in?

The downtown strategy was announced four years ago. As mentioned above, there had not been a private sector building permit in 15 years. Since the announcement of the strategy, there has been $300 million of new development in downtown. There have been very successful restaurants open, the new movie theater, the first new housing in 20 years and a sense that, this time, downtown will actually revitalize. The arts have played a major role in this turnaround. This includes artists working and living downtown, Magnifico’s opening in downtown which has brought thousands of people downtown for openings and visits, public art installations and many other benefits. As the Central Arts District gathers momentum, the arts will be a major anchor for downtown, located along Route 66. Our plans call for an economic structure that will be put in place to allow the arts to be involved downtown permanently. It would be a tragedy if the arts only played a role as pioneer but were then forced out as the downtown became successful, as has happened in many cities across the country.

5. What about this project would be instructive to other developers?

There are a number of lessons that could apply to other revitalization projects:
1. Have the effort be private and non-profit sector led. The public sector needs to provide support but NOT leadership.
2. Provide common economic incentives to the for-profit and non-profit (arts, affordable housing groups, etc.) so that the success of the effort is shared between both sectors.
3. Create walkable places with the car as one of many modes of transportation.
4. Create mixed-use environments with a blend of housing, commercial and recreational within walking distance.
5. Students, artists and the gay community are the pioneers of urban revitalization.
6. Make the revitalization effort market-driven...only focus on projects that have market support, not reflecting unsubstantiated ideas.

6. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Most:
- Urban entertainment components
- Community support for and involvement in the process
- Initial housing projects
- Arts focus

Least:
- Need for better communication due to the speed and the number of various efforts
- Political bickering between the City Council and Mayor’s office
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

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Organization Empower Development International, Inc.  Telephone (505) 878-0998
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Signature

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

I have an ongoing consulting relationship with Magnifico, through which I provide coaching and mentoring to Suzanne Sbarge, the Executive Director and to Don Michaelis, Chairman of the Board.

Specifically, when Magnifico decided to put its efforts into the development of the Downtown Arts District for Albuquerque, they asked me to facilitate strategic planning of this project. In the course of two all-day retreats, I worked with the board and staff to identify goals, establish a plan, and gain clarity on the important role they would play in the development of the downtown arts district.

2. From your perspective, how was the project intended to benefit the urban environment?

Albuquerque is a city of great cultural diversity. While there are many extraordinary artists who live and work in the area, they had previously had little interaction with one another. Magnifico’s effort to create a central arts district has the goals of facilitating cooperation, communication, and collaboration among these artists, to the ultimate benefit of the city as a whole.

The central arts district is also intended to create much-needed pedestrian traffic in downtown Albuquerque, and to encourage a cross-section of our citizens and visitors to interact with one another as well as to generate economic stimulus for downtown businesses, both artistic and other.

This has never been done before in Albuquerque, and the goal is not to copy any other city but to sustain a cross-section of organizations and activity that is appropriate for Albuquerque. We are focusing on preserving the diversity, socially, artistically and economically in order to appeal to a broad base of people.

3. Describe the project’s impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

There is a major redevelopment and “gentrification” going on downtown. Many businesses and non-profit organizations are purchasing and renovating older buildings in order to establish a presence downtown and improve the quality of city life in many ways, including developing Albuquerque’s economic base.

A thriving arts district is a critical component in this overall project, to encourage people to move downtown and to access downtown businesses and opportunities on a daily basis. Magnifico has been very successful in stimulating cooperation among artists and arts organizations, which is having a very positive ongoing effect on the arts community and also on the city as a whole. Their efforts in promoting the work of all of our downtown arts organizations have already proved effective in generating much more awareness, and therefore funding, for the participating organizations.
4. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

This project will take place in phases. The development of the downtown area is naturally a gradual and ongoing process. Not all organizations can participate in the initial phase, and those that do will reap some of the initial benefits, including lower investment cost to move downtown and good publicity associated with the development. Some organizations that have not yet been able to participate are experiencing frustration, which is an inevitable trade-off in a major redevelopment project.

Those arts organizations that are able to relocate their operations to the downtown area are enjoying savings in overhead costs, as we consolidate certain functions (such as advertising, printing, and copying) but they often have to make the trade-off of accepting less space than they were used to in their more remote locations, and they are inevitably trading off some autonomy in order to be part of a larger effort.

Also, our ultimate goal is to build a “string of pearls,” radiating outward from the center of the downtown, where Magnifico’s gallery is located, through the twelve-block area that includes the downtown and historic “Old Town” areas, and beyond. This means, in addition to consolidating and improving the artistic offerings, also encouraging more for-profit businesses to invest in the area, and seeing corresponding improvements in transportation, safety, city services, and everything else that goes into a thriving center city. This project is proceeding well, but obviously takes time, and part of the trade-off—for all of us involved—is learning to be patient and appreciate the gradual improvements.

5. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

Albuquerque is not a wealthy city and cannot support many overlapping non-profit organizations that provide similar services. As we work on improving communication among organizations, and assisting some with the move into the central arts district, it has become clear that some organizations are more necessary, or more efficient, or more effective than others. In other words, one of the side effects of the consolidation process has been a certain amount of winnowing of organizations that are not performing in the most effective ways. While the “survival of the fittest” can be painful, it is instructive to all of us. Those that are to survive and grow have seen more clearly the necessity of having strong business plans, clear visions, and effective management.

Ultimately, the new level of collaboration that is being fostered here in Albuquerque is helping to sustain and grow the arts. In the course of working on this project, I have become more convinced than ever that collaboration and communication are vital to a thriving arts community.

6. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Magnifico’s work in developing the Central Arts District has already brought much-needed visibility to the whole arts scene in Albuquerque. In a community that is not rich and has not historically been a great supporter of the arts, this is an extraordinary success story.

If anything, the area where more work needs to be done is in creating realistic expectations. There has been so much excitement about the initial success of this project that many people are eager to see it come to complete fruition in an unrealistically short period of time. Magnifico must work, at this point, on managing those expectations and perpetuating the level of enthusiasm while not promising more than can be delivered.
ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name: Christopher Calott, AIA  Title: Architect / Associate Professor

Organization: School of Architecture, University of New Mexico  Telephone: (505) 842-8647

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Fax (505) 277-0076  E-mail: ChrisCalott@AOL.com

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Signature

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

Put simply, 516 Magnifico Artspace functions as the primary organization, venue and clearinghouse for the arts in Downtown Albuquerque. In the spring of 2001, Magnifico sponsored an extensive urban design workshop with the charge of defining and creating the CENTRAL ARTS District, centered around Magnifico’s location in Downtown Albuquerque. Supported by funds and partnerships with private sector Downtown revitalization developers, a State-wide charitable Trust, the City of Albuquerque and the University of New Mexico’s School of Architecture, Magnifico held a three-day design “charette” to develop strategies and specific projects for creating a Downtown arts district. The design workshop was free, open to the public, and included the participation of fourteen Albuquerque arts organizations who desire to relocate Downtown and several key property owners. Each arts organization worked with one of ten Albuquerque architects who provided their design services for this event pro bono.

Magnifico has served as the catalyst and forum for the contemporary art scene in Albuquerque since 1991. It moved to its current location at 516 Central Avenue in 1999 and, ever since, has been a leading player in the cultural revitalization of Albuquerque’s Downtown. With its sponsorship and continued leadership role in the development of Albuquerque’s CENTRAL ARTS District, Magnifico has established itself as the single most vital arts organization in the City.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

Clearly, the most important social and programmatic function Magnifico plays is as an accessible art center for the diverse citizenry of Albuquerque. Magnifico consistently promotes adventurous and critical exhibitions, performances, gallery talks, and educational workshops which are free and open to the public. As a kind of urban arts crucible, Magnifico significantly contributes to the multi-cultural richness of our unique Southwest region through its ambitious sponsorship of exhibits and events.

Similarly, the most important social and programmatic function of the recent CENTRAL ARTS District design workshop was to develop a constructive vision for the concentration of diverse arts groups in the area of Downtown Albuquerque around Magnifico. The design workshop was highly successful on many levels. It provided the forum for numerous arts organizations to discuss how they could work together to develop or share spaces Downtown. And, as a result of this effort, Magnifico has been the lead in establishing the CENTRAL ARTS Trust, a fund which provides “seed” money to Downtown relocating arts organizations.
3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

With respect to the urban design strategies developed for the CENTRAL ARTS District, one of the major challenges is attempting to satisfy several different property owners and arts groups at one time. In real estate terms, this is a difficult project because it requires an “act of faith” on everybody's part. First, striking the initial deals between alternative arts users and traditional landlords requires an education process for both. Next, each must exercise a degree of patience to realize the value of creating an arts district in the Downtown, which takes some time to reach a critical mass. In addressing these difficulties, it has been Magnifico’s success and model which has kept these varied interests moving forward to create the CENTRAL ARTS District.

4. Describe the way in which the project relates to its urban context.

From an urban design and real estate perspective, the area along West Central Avenue established as the CENTRAL ARTS District is a natural location for various arts enterprises as the existing building stock is flexible, remains affordable and is adjacent to stable Downtown residential neighborhoods. Additionally, artists are presently migrating into this Downtown area and have been further anchored through Magnifico's role as an arts information and distribution center. Since the Magnifico design workshop, the CENTRAL ARTS District has acquired an identity Downtown and is actively promoted by Magnifico through an extensive Downtown CENTRAL ARTS District Guide published quarterly.

5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project’s design and architecture.

The value of creating a vibrant, inclusive Downtown arts district as presently pursued by Magnifico through its work in support of Albuquerque’s CENTRAL ARTS District seems quite clear. In cities throughout the nation, those places which foster a genuine arts district are often considered to be the most livable and rich. As we look for ways to reclaim our Downtown cores, we consistently find that it is through the tenacious agency of the arts that these areas begin to work their way back to viability. However, the challenge or weakness in this model is that once an area revives due to the success of the arts, it may no longer remain affordable to those very same original urban pioneers, the artists.

Magnifico is a unique entity in a city the size of Albuquerque and through its fine work and presence, has had a tremendous impact on the quality of cultural and urban life in our Downtown. It is a catalyst not only for the arts but potentially for an entire arts district, the CENTRAL ARTS District.
ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE (Continued)

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

Not applicable to my experience with the Organization.

4. Describe the way in which the project relates to its urban context.

The Magistico Art Space is perfectly located in order to promote the burgeoning renaissance of downtown Albuquerque. It is in the center of the commercial and governmental districts and the growing restaurant and club scenes.

5. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of the project's design and Architecture.

The visibility of the space and its location are two major strengths of the project. The simple glass storefront is appropriate for the context of downtown Albuquerque. The clean simple exhibition space is flexible enough to host a diverse range of artistic media.

The low height of the ceilings on the first floor and the inability to use the second floor for exhibitions are unfortunate restrictions.
ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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Name W. Anthony Evanko
Organization W. Anthony Evanko Architect
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Address 317 Wellesley Pl NE
City/State/ZIP Albuquerque, NM 87106
Fax (505) 255-3868

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

As an artist and a design professional I have had the opportunity to participate in a Design Charrette with the purpose of developing an Arts District as a part of the revitalization of downtown Albuquerque. I am also serving as an advisor on one of Magnifico's exhibition boards which is exploring ways to involve the business community in the arts.

Magnifico currently is housed in a small but beautiful space. The exhibitions that have been sponsored by Magnifico have been essential to the improvement of the urban environment in downtown Albuquerque. It serves as a model for future exhibition spaces and acts as a catalyst for the introduction of the arts into the community.

The elegance of the two story aluminum, steel and glass facade and the quality of the exhibitions convey the sophistication of the programming that Magnifico strives for.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

The strategic location of Magnifico's exhibition space is essential to the revitalization effort. The elegant open storefront of the Magnifico exhibition space provides an inviting presence on Central Avenue. The integration of this space with the developing urban fabric is essential for the success of the development of a quality downtown environment.
What is Magnifico?
Magnifico is a contemporary urban arts center in the heart of Downtown Albuquerque. A private, non-profit arts organization, Magnifico serves an ever-increasing audience, reaching more than 100,000 Albuquerque citizens and visitors including thousands of artists and children. Magnifico works to bring together our diverse cultures, producing innovative arts projects developed in partnership with other arts and community organizations and The City of Albuquerque.

Magnifico presents free year-round arts programs throughout the city and at 516 Magnifico Artspace. This premier gallery serves as an arts anchor in the center of Downtown Albuquerque as part of the revitalization of the historic district. Magnifico’s gallery programs provide outreach to a broad audience and strive to enhance Albuquerque’s national reputation as a high-caliber arts destination.

Magnifico Arts Programs
516 Magnifico Artspace
A museum-style gallery space presenting year-round contemporary art exhibits and special events.

Art of Albuquerque Annual Exhibition
A showcase exhibition of Albuquerque area artists at the Albuquerque Museum; a centerpiece event in the arts community.

Education Programs
Arts education outreach programs at Community Centers citywide; educational tours and packets for all exhibitions; gallery talks.

Performances
Concerts, poetry readings, and more.

Special Projects
Participation in Downtown Central Arts District; art and poetry displays in non-traditional venues such as on billboards.

OUR MISSION
Magnifico is an urban center for the arts providing education and innovative programs that reflect diversity, collaboration, and contemporary relevance.

Established in 1991 as an independent non-profit organization, Magnifico has evolved from presenting an annual festival into presenting year-round arts programs throughout the community. Magnifico is honored to be named The City of Albuquerque’s Designated Arts Organization.

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Sarah Mandera, Education Coordinator

516 Central SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
1-505-242-8244
1-505-242-0174
www.magnifico.org
Magnifico needs your support!

No contribution is too small to help us reach our goals!

Your support allows Magnifico to:

- Strengthen the quality of Albuquerque's arts programs and identity as an arts-friendly city
- Contribute to the burgeoning revitalization of Downtown Albuquerque
- Reach out to children in schools and community centers
- Increase tourism
- Promote city-wide collaboration among artists and arts organizations

Contributions make up ONE THIRD of our budget.

MAGNIFICO CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SUPPORT.

Please join the FRIENDS OF MAGNIFICO and help make it all happen!

WHO MAKES IT ALL POSSIBLE

Magnifico works with the business community to realize the economic development potential of the arts community. Contributions from both businesses and individuals, along with ongoing grant writing, help to keep Magnifico thriving. Additionally, 200 volunteers work on Magnifico's behalf annually to plan and produce diverse arts programs.

Gallery Patrons
- ABQArts Magazine
- Kirsten Browne Design
- CameraArts & View Camera Magazines
- Ray & Barbara Graham
- Grubb & Ellis/Livingston Hamilton
- Christopher & Lisa Larberger
- El Faro
- Marilyn & Ron Racca
- Vital Signs
- C. Carter Walker & Jamie Jett Walker
- Wingspread Collector's Guide

Recent Supporters Include
- The City of Albuquerque Department of Family & Community Services Urban Enhancement Trust Fund
- Albuquerque Community Foundation
- The Fulbright
- The Tij & Mary Ray Sivley Endowment Fund
- McCune Charitable Foundation
- New Mexico Arts, a division of the Office of Cultural Affairs
- New Mexico Department of Tourism
- National Endowment for the Arts
- Historic District Improvement Company

Recent Collaborators Include
- Albuquerque Arts Business Association
- The Albuquerque Museum
- Contemporary Arts Society of New Mexico
- Downtown Action Team
- The Harwood Art Center
- Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe
- National Hispanic Cultural Center of New Mexico
- Outpost Performance Space
- SITE Santa Fe
- UNM Art Museum

YES! I want to join the FRIENDS OF MAGNIFICO!

☐ $35 Individual
☐ $50 Family
☐ $100 Contributor
☐ $250 Donor
☐ $500 Partner
☐ $1000 Benefactor
☐ $2400 Patron

OR

I would like to pledge $ over the next ______ months to Magnifico and receive a monthly reminder.

☐ Yes! Contact me about volunteering!

Name ______________________ Address _____________________
City ______________________ State/Zip __________
Phone Number ____________ E-mail ______________________

Please make checks out to Magnifico Arts Incorporated

OR

Please charge my credit card ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard
Card # __________________________ Expiration Date __________
Signature _______________________

Please return this form to:
Magnifico, 516 Central SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102

Magnifico is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization as recognized by the IRS. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Receive a free T-shirt and exhibition catalog with contributions of $100 or more.
Patrons at the level of $1,000 or more receive a free limited edition print by a prominent local artist.