

Creating the Downtown Experience

Francis Bee, Executive Director, Gallup B.I.D., Inc.

A Business Improvement District is a cooperative development project among property owners within a business district. Property owners agree to pay a fee that pays for local improvements. Improvements are designed to increase the appeal and safety of the neighborhood in an attempt to increase business vitality.

The benefit of a BID program is that each business works together through a minimal combined investment to see a large public profit. Business owners pay much less than they would have on their own to get a district-wide improvement.

Improvements can be acquired through grants. This makes a BID a versatile development tool. BID programs help local businesses to prosper and even to expand. They also provide an incentive for other businesses to open a location within the district. Business Improvement Districts are designed to increase local business productivity and vitality while creating a safe environment for consumers.

Gallup BID has enjoyed the ability to respond to capital proposals, event sponsorship requests, maintenance projects, marketing concepts, and other initiatives in a timely manner.

Gallup Business Improvement District is a partner with City of Gallup and Gallup MainStreet Arts & Cultural District for Alley Improvement Pilot Project in the block between 1st and 2nd Streets, Coal and Aztec Avenues. The project includes: Replacement of water and sewer lines and relocation of electric and communication cables. Replacement of commercial trash "herbies" with in-ground trash containers, user-friendly design to encourage pedestrian use. Upon completion, these design and engineering solutions will be used for additional alleys.

Gallup BID will continue to fund downtown private security patrols from June through early September. This investment is Gallup BID's largest annual expenditure.

Gallup BID continues to support Gallup ARTS' management of monthly downtown Arts Crawl events, which draw over 1000 people to downtown each month.

Gallup BID also continues its sponsorship of the Annual Route 66 Freedom Ride Flight and Cruise 3 day festival. In 2017, this event brought over 6,000 people into the downtown area and produced \$595,000 of economic activity within the City of Gallup.

Developing the downtown's central social district functions, which include housing, food stores, restaurants, bars, entertainment and cultural venues, is a sound strategy for attracting shoppers. For small downtown retailers, restaurants and public spaces are especially helpful because they are active when the merchants' shops are open.

In 2017, City of Gallup was awarded a grant of \$150,000 from National Endowment of the Arts. The grant required securing pledges for a 100% match provided by local entities. Gallup BID provided a \$25,000 contribution toward the match amount. BID Director also participates with the committee working with the architectural firms selected to complete the project. The objective of this project is the development of renderings and construction drawings for the recreation of Coal Avenue between 1st and 3rd Streets. This has become a successful "event street" location. The team working on this project includes City of Gallup, Gallup ARTS, NW NM Council of Governments, McKinley County, Gallup MainStreet Arts & Cultural District and Gallup BID. This section of Coal Avenue will become Gallup's "Coal Avenue Commons".

The planning documents will then be used to secure funding for the actual reconstruction of the two blocks of street, curb, sidewalks and creation of design enhancements. Having the construction documents in place will make the project "shovel ready" and increases the likelihood of securing the funds needed for the construction phase. Information about this project, and the schedule of public meetings to be held for input and discussion about the Coal Avenue Commons, may be found online at: www.coalavenuecommons.com or on Facebook @CoalAvenue Commons.

Outcomes of BID related projects:

- Intergenerational connections through participation in the downtown district improvement projects
- Reweaving community infrastructure and physical connections from roots in the historic downtown district
- Reinvigorated awareness of community history, heritage and pride
- Elevation of artists and creative work as one of the keys to community improvement
- Strengthened cooperation among cultural, environmental, economic and civic leaders, sectors and institutions.
- Emergence of new community leaders
- Increased contact among community members in new public spaces, and in the organization of new or expanded activities taking place
- Increased access to professional economic development technical assistance and to funding
- Consumer spending in conjunction with downtown events

Indirect and Potential Impacts:

- Enhanced tourist experiences > increase in visitors & spending
- Greater cooperation and planning among diverse economic sectors
- Reinvigoration of local economy
- New sense of ownership in the community, helping to retain young residents, workers and business owners

Gallup's Downtown Commercial district produces 14% of total retail sales occurring within the City of Gallup, and most of these sales are related to non-food and beverage related activities. Even a small percent increase in downtown economic activity will produce substantial economic benefits for City of Gallup and its residents.