Raton Great Blocks on MainStreet
Redevelopment Package Historic First Street

Project Description

Great Blocks on MainStreet is an innovative redevelopment and placemaking program targeting significant public infrastructure deficiencies within New Mexico's historic and traditional commercial cores. Those deficiencies remain serious barriers to attracting new private sector reinvestment, building renovation and rehabilitation and business expansions or start-ups. In the rural commercial core, public infrastructure has lagged behind changing market needs for commercial properties, often the last major public improvements dating back more than 70 years.

The program is structured to catalyze economic re-investment of commercial property.
It is a comprehensive, innovative and intensive initiative focusing on streetscape vitality, place making, creative economy enhancement, safety and pedestrian accessibility to leverage building and business owner reinvestment. In case studies across the country, enhanced pedestrian street design has shown to increase retail sales, attract new businesses, and create new jobs *(American Public Transportation Assoc, 2014.)*

Raton's historic First Street has an excellent collection of historic and architecturally significant structures in a designated Historic Downtown District. The primary objective of Raton's Great Blocks on MainStreet project is to revitalize the Historic/Arts & Cultural District by preserving and restoring the existing building storefronts, adaptive reuse for commercial buildings, live/work space, downtown housing, creative industries, cultural facilities, creating pedestrian improvements, streetscape enhancements, and wayfinding signage.

The Great Blocks project consists of partnerships between New Mexico MainStreet, Raton MainStreet/Arts & Cultural District, the City of Raton, and the property owners and business people in the business district.

Existing city-committed infrastructure projects on First Street represents over $2M commitment on First Street for the economic revitalization and business expansion of this project area including:

- A Multi-modal Center project next to the historic Rail Depot; this $1.4M transportation project will be under construction in the fall of 2015.

- Completing a $438,000 waterline replacement and a $281,000 First Street resurfacing and curb and gutter replacement project this fall.

- Renovation of the Historic Santa Fe Rail Raton Depot as an anchor to Historic First Street serving as a business and arts incubator space for entrepreneurial start-up jobs.

- Administering and bringing matching funds to the Great Blocks on MainStreet project which has produced final construction documents and licensed and stamped architectural design for Historic First Street.

New Mexico MainStreet will provide a comprehensive set of revitalization services to Raton MainStreet working in partnership with the city of Raton to leverage the public infrastructure resulting in building façade restoration, building renovation, and business development and rebranding Historic First Street.

Working with local revitalization partners, NMMS will help build capacity in four key areas.

- **Communications Strategy**: Assist Raton MainStreet with a comprehensive public relations and communications that build community buy-in and support private investment and business recruitment activities.
- **Taskforce Development**: Establish appropriate implementation teams needed to recruit new businesses, initiate property development projects (including housing) and acquire private or private investment for building rehabilitation and revitalization projects.
- **Capacity-Building**: Comprehensive educational and technical assistance supports needed to enhance the skills, knowledge and processes of project leaders, partners and task force members; Enhance the ability of local leaders to engage stakeholders, manage project deliverables and timelines, coordinate tasks, identify and collect project and economic performance metrics and ensure timely reports to the Economic Development Department.
- **Resource Development**: Connect project leaders to financial resources that support overall projects, including operational funds, matching funds or in-kind donations for façade improvements or building rehabilitations, and incentives for business development and/or historic preservation projects.

Working with local revitalization partners NMMS will assist in property commercial restoration and renovation.

- **Eight to ten buildings on Historic First Street** will be rehabilitated or renovated.
- An **annual property incentive grant** through Raton MainStreet of $20,000 - $50,000.
- An **incentive loan package** (including a doubling of state historic tax credits in the ACD District), **for commercial property rehabilitation** will be developed by Raton MainStreet.
- City of Raton will develop an **expedited building and code inspection and approval process.**
- Two building façades will be addressed per year totaling eight to ten over five years respectively. Design Technical Assistance will be provided by New Mexico MainStreet to assist in building renovation and rehabilitation.
- If the structure is on the National Register or eligible for, The Secretary of the Interior's Standards will be followed.
- Building selection will be based on potential impact, need, location and the greatest opportunity for improvement.

- Improvements may include but are not limited to window and door restoration, entry improvements, façade color updates, awnings, improved business signage, architectural lighting and curbside improvements.

To ensure that the local economy fully benefits from public infrastructure investments, NMMS will work with revitalization partners to implement **a comprehensive business development program**. The program will include:

- Business training, cooperative marketing and events to enhance the performance of existing businesses.
- Business expansion planning to help businesses seize new market opportunities created by the catalytic investments including building on creative economy opportunities.
- Assistance to property owners to help with preparing their properties for desired tenancies, planning building rehabilitation projects, acquiring financing, and marketing business locations to prospects.
- Business recruitment activities to market the Great Blocks area and entire MainStreet district to prospective new businesses, cultural entrepreneurs, creative industries, cultivate prospects, and assist prospects in developing and achieving their business plans.

Over the five-year implementation period, Raton's Great Blocks on MainStreet Project will result in the following economic development impacts:

	Sales Increases	Jobs Created
3 exterior and/or interior building improvement projects:		
7 new businesses in 5 improved buildings	$4,900,000	22
8 additional building improvement projects enhancing existing businesses	$402,000	2
Pedestrian, streetscape & wayfinding improvements	$997,500	4
4 business expansions	$200,000	2
TOTAL	**$6,499,500**	**30**

Public Finance sought for public infrastructure construction reinvestment - $1.2 million

See attachments: Construction budget, architectural drawings

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