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## Ahead of downtown ABQ BID meeting, business leaders discuss how a new plan could be different, improved



Image: Albuquerque Business First

A group of downtown property owners will meet April 3 at 500 Marquette Ave. NW to discuss making downtown a more business-friendly environment through a business improvement district (BID).

COOPER METTS



By [Cooper Metts](#) – Real Estate Reporter , Albuquerque Business First  
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A group of downtown Albuquerque property owners will meet April 3 at [500 Marquette Ave. NW](#) to discuss making downtown a more business-friendly environment through a business improvement district (BID).

A BID, or business improvement district, is a private-sector initiative to improve a business district with services or products financed by a self-imposed, self-governed assessment. Products and services from a BID complement those provided by its city and county.

Created in Canada, BIDs are now common in the U.S., with over 1,000 in the country, according to the American Planning Association.

But downtown Albuquerque is one of the few metros its size without one, as Tucson, Colorado Springs and Long Beach, among others, have a BID.

Property owners established a BID in downtown Albuquerque in 2000 before it was disestablished in 2015.

Albuquerque Business First spoke with business leaders and property owners involved with the original downtown BID about why it was disestablished and how they think that experience could inform a new, better BID.

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## **What happened to the previous downtown BID**

[One of downtown's largest property owners](#), Heritage Real Estate Co. President Jim Long, sued to disestablish the previous downtown BID, according to former downtown BID board chair and current Duke City Commercial LLC President Joe Farr.

Long said he sued to have the previous BID disestablished because its board did not gather proper signatures in 2010 when it was up for a five-year renewal, as property owners within a BID can sign to either continue or discontinue a BID every five years.

The previous downtown BID board, referred to as the Downtown Action Team, used signatures from people other than downtown property owners to renew the BID, Long said.

City officials accepted those signatures without verification, even after Long mentioned this during a City Council meeting, he said.

Long sued, and the downtown BID was disestablished in 2015.

Like Long, Peterson Properties President Doug Peterson – who served on the Downtown Action Team twice and owns property downtown – felt the previous downtown BID was poorly managed.

Peterson said the previous downtown BID spent too much of its budget on staffing and events such as galas, board meeting meals and lectures or seminars. Long added the operations had “very high” administrative costs.

“Once they had us burn a whole workday listening to some guru in a black turtleneck talk about “BHAG,” which stood for “Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals,” Peterson said. “The whole thing was an enormous waste of time that never focused on adding resources to downtown.”

Long also asserted the previous downtown BID was improperly structured, meaning that its products and services were not concentrated near properties that paid the most in BID assessments.

Properly structured or not, Farr felt the previous downtown BID was improving the business environment. Peterson disagreed, feeling as if the previous downtown BID did not make downtown visitors feel any more safe than before the BID.

He and Long also noted that the City, which is responsible for facilitating the BID’s establishment and operation, did not carry out its fiduciary responsibilities.

Still, Long said that he would be in favor of a downtown BID if it was properly administered and structured.

“Those are the two key components of a successful BID,” Long said. “There’s wonderful examples of that all over the country. It’s because they were properly structured and administered.”

### **How a new downtown BID could be different**

During a Feb. 5 downtown BID meeting for stakeholders, attendants took a survey to determine what they would want a downtown BID to fund.

Overwhelmingly, attendants voted they would want it to fund safety and cleanliness services, [Bill Keleher](#), a BID proponent and organizer, said in an email statement.

Similarly, a separate downtown BID study group comprised of downtown property owners – including both skeptics and proponents of the BID – said they would most want a BID to fund safety and cleanliness, Keleher added.

How exactly the downtown BID would do that is still to be determined, Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) President Brad Segal said. PUMA is the downtown BID consultant for the property owners and City, Segal said.

And to address issues surrounding the City’s responsibility, advocates and leaders of the new downtown BID are working to formulate a baseline services agreement, which would establish the services and products the City must provide after establishment of the BID.

It’s not yet clear how a new downtown BID would create an agreeable assessment, but it’s something that its advocates and leaders are working to determine.

“I hope they can get something done,” Farr said. “But, I’m skeptical they can get to that point because of the history.”

THE LIST

Economic Development Agencies

2024 budget

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1	1	Village of Los Lunas, Economic Development
2	2	New Mexico Small Business Development Center Ecosystem (NMSBDCE)
3	3	WESST
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