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Briefing:

- *Peterson digs in against the BID, pitches private security alternative*
- *New series of community rides aims to bring more neighborhoods into the cycling fold*
- *Photos of the track removal above Central*

Peterson digs in against the BID, pitches private security alternative

To those who merely keep an eye on the politics of the Downtown core, Doug Peterson's opposition to the proposed business improvement district might seem like something to be expected. The BID would, after all, levy a new tax - even if it is formally called an "assessment" - and create a new governing institution devoted to security, beautification, and marketing. Such proposals involve real money and are bound to be controversial, even if they have ultimately been adopted in thousands of other American cities. It would be an especially big deal for Peterson, who holds (by his count) just under 40 parcels in the core, making him the largest property owner there. The annual check he would be obligated to write under a BID would be eye-watering indeed.

To those more deeply immersed in the history of Downtown politics, however, Peterson's position is a bit of a head-scratcher. That's because this is actually the city center's second experience with a BID: The first one operated from roughly 2000 to 2014 before dissolving amid a hail of acrimony and litigation. And the members of that BID's board of directors included the same Doug Peterson.

He wasn't always a BID critic, in other words. But his thinking has evolved considerably over the years, mainly because he believes the first BID ultimately failed to address what he reckons is the Downtown core's most pressing need: more security.

"You start off, you're naive," Peterson said in an interview conducted last week in his ground-floor office in the Simms Building. "I obviously want to make Downtown better, but I'm not going to get fooled again by an ineffective government and pay yet again for it."

Yet this too might strike some observers as a bit of a head-scratcher. After all, whatever problems the previous BID had, the organizers of the current one have every incentive to avoid them. So far, they have managed to bring WaFd Building owner Jim Long, who helped litigate the previous BID out of existence, on board. The proposal for the current BID also includes a heavy emphasis on security, a very common feature of such organizations across the country. When it comes to the previous BID experience, the vibe is very much "that was then, this is now."

But talk to Peterson, and it quickly becomes clear that he's less interested in how the new BID might work differently in theory or how other such organizations work elsewhere. Instead, he is laser-focused on how he thinks this one is likely to play out in practice, and it's not a bullish forecast. He already spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on security services in the core each year and views the BID as nothing less than an effort by others to seize control of that money.

"I think about who would be in charge of it," he said of the proposed BID. "I don't trust the government, and I don't trust a lot of my neighbors who are trying to do this."

He also has philosophical objections, bristling at the idea of a tax backed up by the coercive power of local governments, institutions with which he is famously not on good terms. Having repeatedly criticized Mayor Tim Keller and his administration over matters of crime and public safety, Peterson even found himself [the target of unusually critical tweets from an official APD account](#) - messages that drew a bipartisan rebuke from the City Council. More recently, he's been tangling with County Assessor Damian Lara over steep increases in property valuations.

"When a private function can achieve the same end, there's no reason to get the government involved," Peterson said.

To that end, he is pitching a sort of stripped-down BID alternative: an opt-in subscription-based security service called United Neighbors Improving Downtown Albuquerque. Property owners who join would be folded into Peterson's existing private security patrol network and receive a phone number to call for a quick response to a specific incident, typically within five minutes, he estimates. What exactly that would cost an owner looking to join, however, is TBD.

If nothing else, the model is straightforward and promises a quick implementation, but it also presents complications. For property owners looking for more Downtown security but also district-wide beautification and marketing, for example, they will not find it with the Peterson arrangement. That's a project for

another day when the Downtown patient is stabilized, he said. Then there's the matter of whether some property owners would balk at working with Peterson even if they liked the idea on some level. The city, for example, is one of the core's largest landholders and is very much invested in the BID. Peterson said they are welcome to join his group all the same.

There's also the question of the extent to which a network of individual owners looking to defend their individual properties - something that already exists in the core, albeit at a smaller scale than Peterson envisions - could actually wind up changing the security equation across the broader district in the way a BID team working the whole area might. Peterson thinks it's possible, however, and that it would involve enforcement work along the rights-of-way between subscriber properties, and then growing the membership over time.

"I don't know what the magic number is for it to achieve its maximum effectiveness. I think the bigger the better," Peterson said. "There's a tipping point there somewhere ... I think we're almost already there ourselves, and with the people who have already expressed interest in UNIDA - without me even marketing it - we're there."

(Peterson did not provide names of those others on board with the idea, with the exception of mayoral candidate Daniel Chavez, the president of the Parking Company of America. Chavez confirmed his interest last week.)

The opt-in model, like so many public television stations before it, may also struggle with a free-rider problem. Property owners located between two UNIDA members, for example, might find that their security situation improves without having to pay up, and thus would have less incentive to do so.

But Peterson thinks there is an obvious way to make it work anyway.

"There are going to be some freeloaders in the world, but they're not going to get the response if, say, a transient comes in their store, sits down, and won't leave," he said. "They're dealing with it just like they are now."

In the end, the voluntary nature of UNIDA is something of a double-edged sword. A BID backed by a tax may strike many as offensive on its face, but it has the advantage of solving the free-rider problem while cobbling together a reliable budget and a program that can last for years (the initial BID term is five years, after which it is subject to renewal). Opt-in arrangements, meanwhile, may struggle to stay together, but the accountability angle is more direct and immediate. Unsatisfied customers can bail out in a matter of days.

For Peterson, that's a feature and not a bug. If his system doesn't deliver value, he argues, it will collapse, and "that's important," he said.

As the BID's petition drive continues ([DAN, 5/15/25](#)), Peterson's opposition remains one of the new proposal's biggest obstacles. Organizer Bill Keleher said last month that the effort, which needs to obtain a majority of owner signatures within a zone that comprises most of the Downtown core, is working with an electorate of about 180 properties. Assuming that math is about right, it would mean Peterson holds about 20 percent of the votes all by himself.

And even if other property owners overrule him, Peterson says he'll refuse to pay the BID dues, potentially impacting the future organization's budget. An attorney, he adds that he will fight in court any official efforts to collect the money through liens or other methods.

Once upon a time, he was an advocate for a BID, but these days, Peterson gives every impression of being an immovable object who will do his best to block a second attempt. And then some.

"I'm only 49," he said. "Unless I keel over tomorrow, they've got decades of this ahead of them."

New series of community rides aims to bring more neighborhoods into the cycling fold



Story Riders, the nonprofit behind the initiative, often leads groups of youth on bicycling adventures, but that mission is broadening. Courtesy photo



The new initiative takes inspiration from the cyclists of Ciudad Juárez, who organize frequent group events like this one in April in their downtown. Courtesy photo

A new series of free community bike rides begins this month as part of a broader push by the cycling nonprofit [Story Riders](#) to open up its mission and get more people pedaling across Albuquerque.

Events are slated to begin next week at both Casa Barelás (Fourth and Pacific) and Valle del Bosque Park (directly across the river from the zoo), with people of all ages and skill levels heading out on rides in the "no-drop" style, meaning everyone stays together. Destinations include the Albuquerque Museum, and the events will also be supplemented by free bike repair clinics. The first rides [have been scheduled](#), but more will be posted to the [Story Riders social media feed](#).

The goal is to focus participant recruitment on neighborhoods like Barelás, South Broadway, San José, and Vecinos del Bosque, areas that organizers say haven't always received top-notch levels of cycling outreach and support.

"It's a huge need in the Latino community, especially," Story Riders founder Marco Sandoval said. "People want to get into cycling."

The series, which is funded with a \$20,000 grant from Bernalillo County Commissioner Frank Baca, marks a significant shift for the organization, which has traditionally focused on smaller class-clinic-ride combinations designed for young people drawn from area schools ([DAN, 8/2/21](#)).

"It's always been a question on our mind ... how do we have the biggest impact and the deepest impact," Sandoval said. "We're just going to go totally public with what we're doing."

The new approach draws inspiration from just across the border. Sandoval has taken part in rides in Ciudad Juárez with a group called [Colectivo Ciclista Fixiebeat](#), and he said those events are replete with the sort of positive spirit he hopes features in the Albuquerque rides.

"They just really focus on the community," Sandoval said. "It's really magical and empowering."

The hope is that by the end of the summer, the rides will begin to take on a life of their own, with community members stepping up to organize events independently.

"We're hoping that after the course of the summer, hopefully we'll be out of a job," Sandoval said.

Or at least out of that particular job. The plan is to return to youth-oriented classes in the fall as well as continue to seed the Story Riders model to other cities with the help of a modular training course that the organization has developed.

Another project growing out of Story Riders' evolving mission is a Spanish-language, all-female cycling class and ride series. Sandoval said the idea came after conversations with his mother, who is from Chihuahua City (roughly four hours south of Juárez) and told him she wished she had had access to something like that growing up. Sandoval then started asking around and found a common refrain he characterized as "I would love to do it, but I just don't know where to start."

That was all the inspiration he and the group needed.

"We said, 'We speak Spanish, let's do this and make it happen,'" Sandoval said.

Beyond that, there's still plenty of work to do to spread the gospel of cycling. Sandoval is convinced that demand for opportunities is high but that many people are held back, potentially by relatively simple things like a bad experience with a low-quality bike that was hard to maintain or uncomfortable to ride.

"My mission is to demystify cycling," he said.

Track record



The city recently posted these photos to social media showing the track work being done on top of the Central underpass as part of the project to build an at-grade

crossing there. Until recently, there were five sets of tracks crossing the bridge (including [one merge arrangement](#)). When the work is done, there will be four.

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