



arts & culture

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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letter from the DIRECTOR



In 2024, the Department of Arts & Culture remained steadfast in its mission to enrich the lives of Albuquerque residents and visitors through creativity, connection, and care. Across our seven divisions, our team worked to provide meaningful, accessible, and joyful experiences for all. What follows is a snapshot of this shared impact—stories of innovation, transformation, and collaboration rooted in our deep commitment to this city we love.

As we reflect on 2024 and the last seven years of transformation, we are more committed than ever to our mission. In 2025, we have continued to expand access, foster creativity, and support people and places that make Albuquerque unique. Across every division, our shared vision is clear: to create a city where everyone belongs, and everyone is inspired.

Dr. Shelle Sanchez

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelle Sanchez" with a stylized flourish at the end.

our places & PROGRAMS



In 2024, the Department of Arts & Culture touched the lives of millions by creating spaces, programs, and experiences where Albuquerque's creativity could shine and communities could come together. Across our seven divisions, we invested in access, inclusion, and innovation, so visitors to our venues could engage with arts, history, culture, science, and storytelling in ways that inspire connection and pride. From world-class exhibits at the ABQ BioPark and Albuquerque Museum, to vibrant neighborhood celebrations, Public Art installations, and hundreds of Library programs, Arts & Culture's work continues to shape a city where culture is not just observed, but lived.

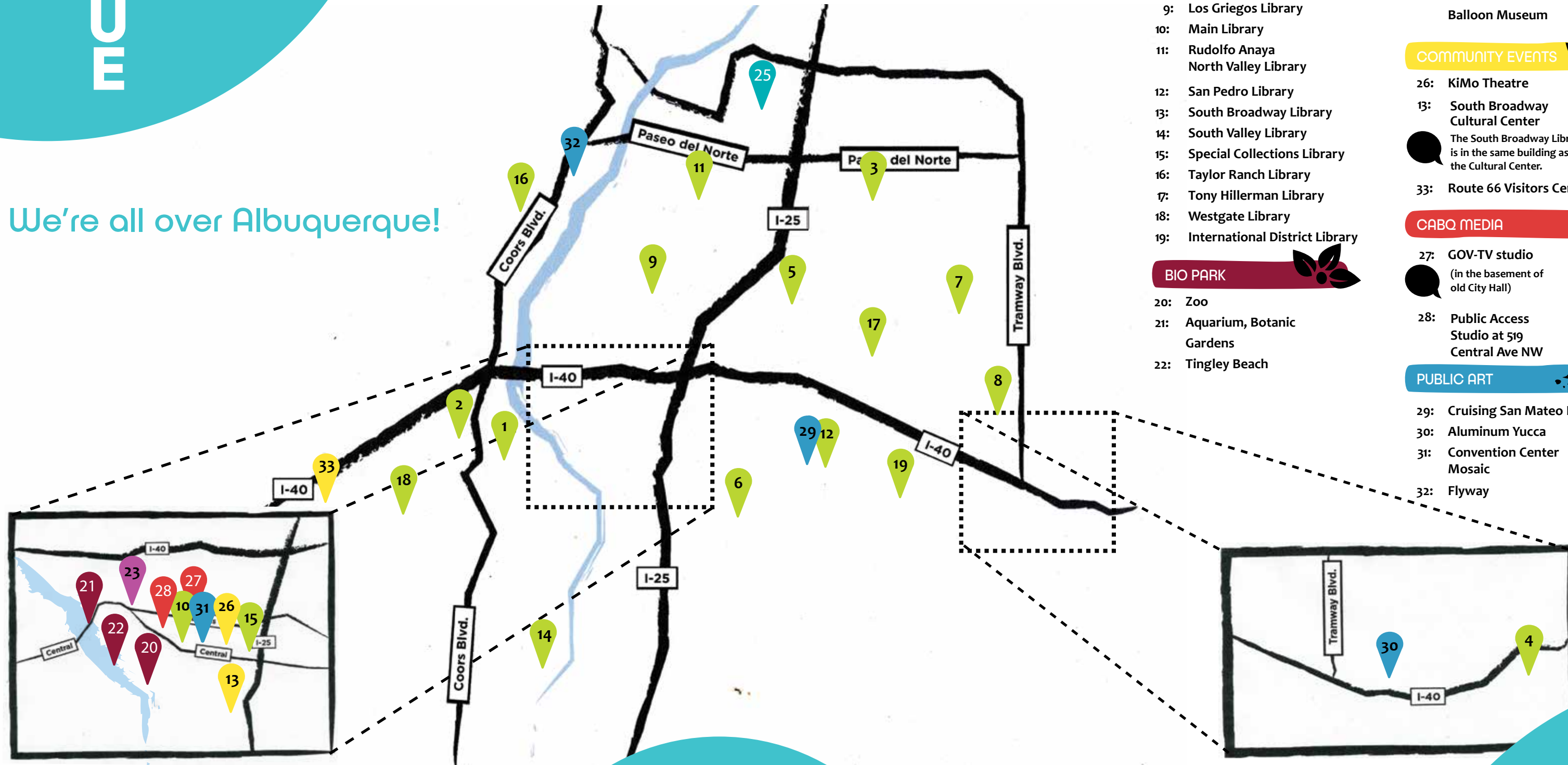
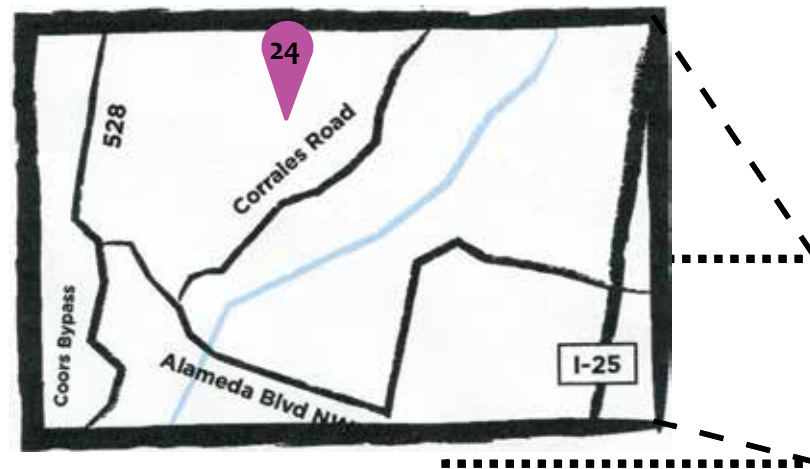
This report offers a snapshot of that impact by highlighting projects and programs that made 2024 a year of growth and transformation. The achievements detailed here are the result of dedicated teams, community collaboration, and a shared belief that arts and culture are essential to a thriving Albuquerque. Together, we are building a city that celebrates its heritage, nurtures its talent, and welcomes all to participate in its creative future.



ONE ALBUQUERQUE

arts & culture

We're all over Albuquerque!



LIBRARIES

- 1: Alamosa Library
- 2: Central & Unser - Patrick J. Baca Library
- 3: Cherry Hills Library
- 4: East Mountain Library
- 5: Erna Fergusson Library
- 6: Ernie Pyle Library
- 7: Juan Tabo Library
- 8: Lomas Tramway Library
- 9: Los Griegos Library
- 10: Main Library
- 11: Rudolfo Anaya North Valley Library
- 12: San Pedro Library
- 13: South Broadway Library
- 14: South Valley Library
- 15: Special Collections Library
- 16: Taylor Ranch Library
- 17: Tony Hillerman Library
- 18: Westgate Library
- 19: International District Library

BIO PARK



- 20: Zoo
- 21: Aquarium, Botanic Gardens
- 22: Tingley Beach

ALBUQUERQUE MUSEUM

- 23: Albuquerque Museum
- 24: Casa San Ysidro in Corrales



BALLOON MUSEUM

- 25: Anderson Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum



COMMUNITY EVENTS



- 26: KiMo Theatre
- 33: Route 66 Visitors Center

CABQ MEDIA



- 27: GOV-TV studio (in the basement of old City Hall)
- 28: Public Access Studio at 519 Central Ave NW

PUBLIC ART



- 29: Cruising San Mateo I
- 30: Aluminum Yucca
- 31: Convention Center Mosaic
- 32: Flyway



ABQ BioPark

2024 was a banner year for the ABQ BioPark, marked by landmark exhibit openings, prestigious recognitions, and trailblazing conservation work.

The opening of Australian Shores and the Lorikeets habitat immersed guests in Australia's ecological and cultural heritage. Australian Shores is now home to the world's largest man-made habitat for the world's smallest penguins—a unique experience for visitors and a vital conservation effort.

The BioPark became a Certified Autism Center, launching with a Low Sensory River of Lights night that earned glowing reviews. One parent shared, “We love River of Lights, but it always leads to a meltdown. This year my family had the most amazing time with no sensory struggles at all.”

The BioPark welcomed nearly 1.2 million visitors in 2024, with nearly 102,000 guests—or 9% of total attendance—accessing the facility through the SNAP discount program, reflecting the BioPark's commitment to accessibility and community inclusion.

The BioPark was awarded a prestigious AZA Exhibit Award for the Asia expansion—further validating the facility's industry leadership. Tonka, one of America's oldest orangutans, passed away in 2024—

but not before enjoying a final six months filled with enrichment, exploration, and vitality in the new Asia habitat. His story reflects the BioPark's deep commitment to lifelong animal care.

Additionally, the BioPark secured funding for a future Mexican Wolf Conservation Facility, a direct result of long-standing collaboration with US Fish and Wildlife and New Mexico Game and Fish. And in 2024 alone, 50,000 Rio Grande silvery minnows were released into the river as part of the BioPark's native species recovery efforts.





Albuquerque Museum

In 2024, the Albuquerque Museum furthered its mission to preserve, interpret, and celebrate art, history, and culture with expansive public engagement, cutting-edge exhibitions, and groundbreaking partnerships.

With 104,533 total visitors and nearly 10,000 school participants, the museum served a wide cross-section of the public—on site and online. The e-museum platform drew more than 15,000 unique users from 97 countries, making over 66,000 record views possible. Notably, Hong Kong was the second most frequent user after the U.S.

At Casa San Ysidro, a new exhibition space allowed important pieces from the Reserve Collection to be displayed safely despite climate limitations. In 2024, the museum acquired 59 new traditional Hispanic artworks, many from living artists, reflecting the vibrancy and continuity of local cultures.

Free public programming for exhibitions like Broken Boxes fostered relationships with African American and Native American artists. Twenty-three nationally recognized artists participated in lectures and workshops, supported by regional universities and youth organizations.

The museum also continued its international impact. A teacher from Galena, Alaska, shared how a 2023 visit inspired another group to travel in 2024 to Albuquerque and the Museum—many leaving Alaska for the first time.

And locally, a parent shared how Museum School and Family Art Workshops helped their previously introverted child gain confidence and communication skills, calling the museum an “impactful resource in our neighborhood.”

The Albuquerque Museum secured over \$325,000 in grant funding through expanded efforts led by the Albuquerque Museum Foundation. This included major support from national organizations such as the Terra Foundation, Chicago Woodman Foundation, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Arts, and Frederick Hammersley Fund. These grants reflect a growing national recognition of the museum’s work and mark a strategic shift toward diversifying funding sources to sustain exhibitions, educational programming, and acquisitions well into the future.



Anderson Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum

In 2024, the Balloon Museum elevated its offerings—literally and figuratively—with a focus on hands-on learning, STEAM innovation, and joyful memory-making for all ages.

A major milestone was the renovation of the Stories in the Sky Book Nook, made possible by a generous sponsorship from PNC Bank. This became a cornerstone of the museum's early literacy programming. At the Stories and Music in the Sky Literacy Launch, children from across the city celebrated reading with live music, a balloon drop, and a surprise appearance by Sesame Street's Cookie Monster.

New and returning educational programs flourished. The field trip program welcomed 673 students, while seasonal programming like AIR-Mazing and Montgolfier Days reached over 1,150 young learners, offering hands-on lessons in buoyancy, density, and the physics of ballooning.

A new VR Balloon Ride experience launched during Balloon Fiesta, created with Visit Albuquerque and Jesse Sansom. More than 5,600 visitors took flight without leaving the ground—an extraordinary innovation in immersive learning. The museum

also piloted inclusive programming, including a morning for seniors during Balloon Fiesta, offering a tranquil space to enjoy the festivities.

One standout event was STEAM Night: Zozobra, where more than 400 guests gathered to witness the inflation of a towering Zozobra-themed hot air balloon and explore science and art side by side.

Heading into its 20th anniversary, the Balloon Museum continues to prioritize creativity, education, and delight—ensuring every visitor finds something to uplift them.

One ABQ Media

In 2024, One ABQ Media continued to amplify the stories that shape our city. From livestreaming the Mayor’s State of the City address at the Zoo to expanding access at Studio 519, the division supported every department in reaching audiences with clarity, creativity, and transparency.

With over 400,000 views on YouTube and 115,000 events posted to ABQ ToDo, One ABQ Media’s reach goes beyond the metro area. The team innovated through new storytelling projects—like the Route 66 Neon Project and Unity in Place—shining a light on community, culture, and connection.

As the media landscape continues to evolve, One Albuquerque Media refined its internal workflows and embraced new technology to remain responsive, inclusive, and impactful—amplifying community voices and strengthening civic engagement across platforms.





Community Events

The Community Events team brought people together in 2024 with inclusive programming, strategic partnerships, and creative evolution.

Freedom 4th was executed seamlessly thanks to strong interdepartmental coordination in true One Albuquerque fashion. And the Twinkle Light Parade saw a record 50% first-time participants, up from a typical 20%.

Management of the Route 66 Visitor Center began in April, with improvements focused on infrastructure and long-term sustainability for what will become a premiere gathering space on Albuquerque's Westside. New storytelling-based social media strategy led to increased vendor applications and audience engagement. Partnerships with Lensic 360 and AMP Concerts at KiMo and South Broadway Cultural Center created broader access to world-class performances.

Through it all, the division exemplified adaptability, teamwork, and joy—ensuring that arts and culture thrive across every corner of the city.





Public Art | Urban Enhancement

In 2024, the Public Art Urban Enhancement Division proudly opened Gallery One, a bold new art space in City Hall. With eight exhibitions showcasing the work of 89 local artists—including 71 City employees—Gallery One is more than a gallery; it's a platform for expression, education, and civic dialogue.

The Public Art Census, in partnership with Rokh and Bernalillo County, revealed over 11,364 public artworks throughout the region—solidifying Albuquerque's place as one of the most art-rich communities in the U.S.

Support for working artists remained central. Through the Urban Enhancement Trust Fund, 30 nonprofit organizations received funding. The UETF Resiliency Residency II supported 34 artists via two fiscal sponsors, offering cross-disciplinary collaboration and career development.

Initiatives like the Internet of Things Artist Bootcamp at CNM Fuse Makerspace were described by participants as “life-changing.” The 10-week program resulted in tech-integrated public artworks and inspired new artistic trajectories. And in December, City Brights II lit up Downtown with 11 interactive light-based installations and performances across nine locations, bringing

art directly to nighttime audiences and local businesses.

Strategic partnerships were critical to success. The division collaborated with the Albuquerque International Sunport on over \$3 million in new airport art commissions, and with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Friends of the Orphan Signs to co-create a new sign-inspired artwork in the International District.

The division also offered cultural competency training citywide, hosting Cultural Appropriation vs. Appreciation workshops to ensure community engagement is ethical, inclusive, and respectful—an initiative that will grow in 2025.



Public Library – Albuquerque/Bernalillo County

Our library system welcomed more than 1.6 million visits in 2024—nearly returning to pre-pandemic levels. With 54,000 community room bookings, thousands of storytime attendees, and high school diplomas earned through Career Online High School, the Library continues to be a cornerstone of access, literacy, and opportunity.

New initiatives, like adding a STEM coordinator and programs including Lunar New Year celebrations and Jane Austen Week, expanded how patrons of all ages engage with learning and imagination. A dedicated play space at the San Pedro branch brought joy to young families, and services in partnership with Healthcare for the Homeless and local schools connected residents to critical resources.

Patrons called the library “the best example of tax dollars in action.” In a city of readers, thinkers, and doers, the Public Library is a gathering place, a lifeline, and a launchpad for what’s next.



A Snapshot of Progress (2017–2024)

Over the past seven years, the Department of Arts & Culture has undergone a transformative journey—expanding access, modernizing infrastructure, and deepening its commitment to equity, creativity, and community.

- The **ABQ BioPark**, fueled by GRT investment, opened world-class habitats like Penguin Chill, Asia, and Australian Shores, while advancing conservation leadership and becoming Albuquerque’s first Certified Autism Center.
- The **Albuquerque Museum** dramatically increased national grant funding, professionalized curatorial staff, expanded global access to its collections through e-museum, and launched acclaimed exhibitions and partnerships that centered regional voices and living traditions.
- **Community Events** evolved from siloed operations to a unified, nimble team producing inclusive celebrations like Freedom 4th and the Twinkle Light Parade, while managing iconic venues and new civic spaces like the Route 66 Visitor Center.
- **The Public Art Urban Enhancement Division** updated the Art in Municipal Places Ordinance

to increase funding and formally include digital and temporary media, launched major citywide initiatives like Gallery One and City Brights, and led one of the nation’s only public art censuses—identifying over 11,000 creative works in public space across Bernalillo County.

- **The Public Library ABQ-BernCo** remained a vital civic hub through the pandemic and beyond—opening the International District Library, launching innovative STEAM programs, and serving over 1.6 million visitors in 2024 alone.
- **One Albuquerque Media** expanded citywide storytelling with livestreamed content, original series like Unity in Place, and thousands of videos, podcast, and digital projects that lifted up community voices and government transparency.
- **The Balloon Museum** rebranded, revamped its education programs, expanded permanent staff, introduced virtual reality experiences, and broadened its intergenerational reach—setting the stage for its 20th anniversary in 2025.

Together, these achievements reflect a department that has not only adapted to change—but led with creativity, care, and a deep belief in the power of arts and culture to connect and transform.



Spotlight On: Route 66 Centennial

Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future: Route 66 Centennial Initiatives

As the nation prepares to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Route 66 in 2026, the Department of Arts & Culture is leading the way in Albuquerque with creative projects that honor the legacy of the Mother Road while reimagining its future through public art, storytelling, and community engagement.

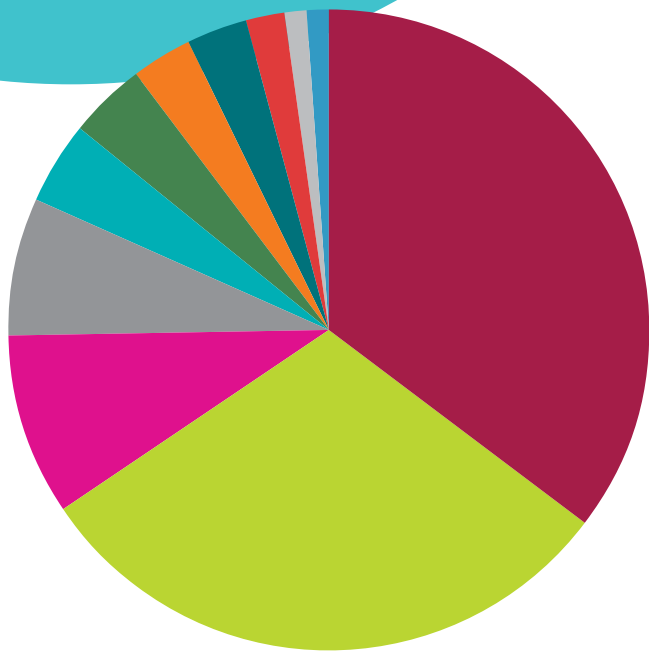
In 2024, DAC announced an art-fueled road trip through Albuquerque, a public art initiative in partnership with Meow Wolf, Refract Studio and 10 local artists that reinterprets Albuquerque's 18-mile stretch of Route 66 through the lens of contemporary artists, designers, and local historians. This project brings together murals, sculpture, signage, and multimedia experiences to highlight both the cultural landmarks and untold stories that define the historic corridor.

Through collaborative partnerships with artists, businesses, and community groups, DAC will support multiple centennial-inspired activations along the route—particularly in neighborhoods where the identity of Route 66 continues to shape local culture.

With more projects in development, Albuquerque's Route 66 Centennial is not just a commemoration — it's a citywide celebration of heritage, innovation, and the road ahead. DAC's work ensures that Albuquerque's stretch of America's most famous highway remains a vibrant cultural destination for the next century.



budget and IMPACT



Total FY 2024
Operating Budget
\$50,429,000

ABQ BioPark

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| \$17,297,000 | 34% |
|--------------|-----|

Public Library
Albuquerque and
Bernalillo County

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| \$16,536,000 | 33% |
|--------------|-----|

Albuquerque Museum

| | |
|-------------|----|
| \$4,263,000 | 8% |
|-------------|----|

Community Events Division
(Special Events, KiMo, SBCC,
Old Town Events, Railyards)

| | |
|-------------|----|
| \$2,837,000 | 6% |
|-------------|----|

Sponsored Events
and Partnerships

| | |
|-------------|----|
| \$1,984,000 | 4% |
|-------------|----|

Strategic Support
(admin)

| | |
|-------------|----|
| \$1,838,000 | 4% |
|-------------|----|

Explora

| | |
|-------------|----|
| \$1,792,000 | 4% |
|-------------|----|

Anderson Abruzzo
Albuquerque International
Balloon Museum

| | |
|-------------|----|
| \$1,650,000 | 3% |
|-------------|----|

CABQ Media

| | |
|-------------|----|
| \$1,116,000 | 2% |
|-------------|----|

Public Art/Urban
Enhancement

| | |
|-----------|----|
| \$781,000 | 1% |
|-----------|----|

Youth Initiatives

| | |
|-----------|----|
| \$335,000 | 1% |
|-----------|----|