



arts & culture

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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letter from the DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

2025 was a year defined by milestones, celebrations, and preparation for what lies ahead.

Across the Department of Arts & Culture, we embraced a remarkable season of anniversaries while laying the groundwork for one of Albuquerque's most significant cultural moments: the Route 66 Centennial. As the lead coordinating department for the City's centennial efforts, Arts & Culture spent the year working alongside partners across Albuquerque to prepare for this once-in-a-generation celebration of the Mother Road and the stories, creativity, and communities that have shaped our city's 18-mile stretch of Route 66. From launching major public art initiatives and immersive experiences to building partnerships that will carry us through 2026, this work reflects our commitment to honoring history while imagining what comes next.

At the same time, we celebrated milestones that speak to the enduring importance of our public and cultural institutions.

Downtown's Main Library marked 50 years as a cornerstone of learning, connection, and public life. We also honored 100 years of Special Collections Library, a century of preserving Albuquerque's stories and safeguarding the archives, photographs, maps, and artifacts that help us understand who we are and where we have been.

These anniversaries remind us that Arts & Culture is both a steward and builder by preserving the places, collections, and traditions that define Albuquerque while investing in new experiences that will inspire generations to come.

Throughout 2025, this spirit of stewardship and innovation was evident across every division of our department. From exhibitions and performances to literacy initiatives, public art, educational programming, and special events, our teams continued to create spaces where Albuquerque's diverse communities could gather, learn, celebrate, and connect.

As we look ahead, we do so with excitement and purpose. The work completed in 2025 and early 2026 has positioned Albuquerque to step confidently into the Route 66 Centennial and beyond, showcasing our city as a place where history is honored, creativity thrives, and culture continues to shape our future.

Thank you to our staff, partners, artists, supporters, and community members whose vision and dedication made this year possible. Together, we are not only celebrating important milestones, but also building momentum for even more to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelle Sanchez".

Dr. Shelle Sanchez
Director, Department of Arts & Culture

our places & PROGRAMS



In 2025, the Department of Arts & Culture continued to enrich Albuquerque through experiences that brought people together, celebrated our city's unique identity, and expanded access to arts, culture, history, nature, and lifelong learning. Across our seven divisions, we welcomed residents and visitors into museums, libraries, parks, theaters, gardens, community events, and public spaces where creativity, education, and connection could flourish. From nationally recognized exhibitions and major capital improvements to neighborhood festivals, public art installations, educational programming, and conservation efforts, the Department continued to make culture an essential part of everyday life in Albuquerque.

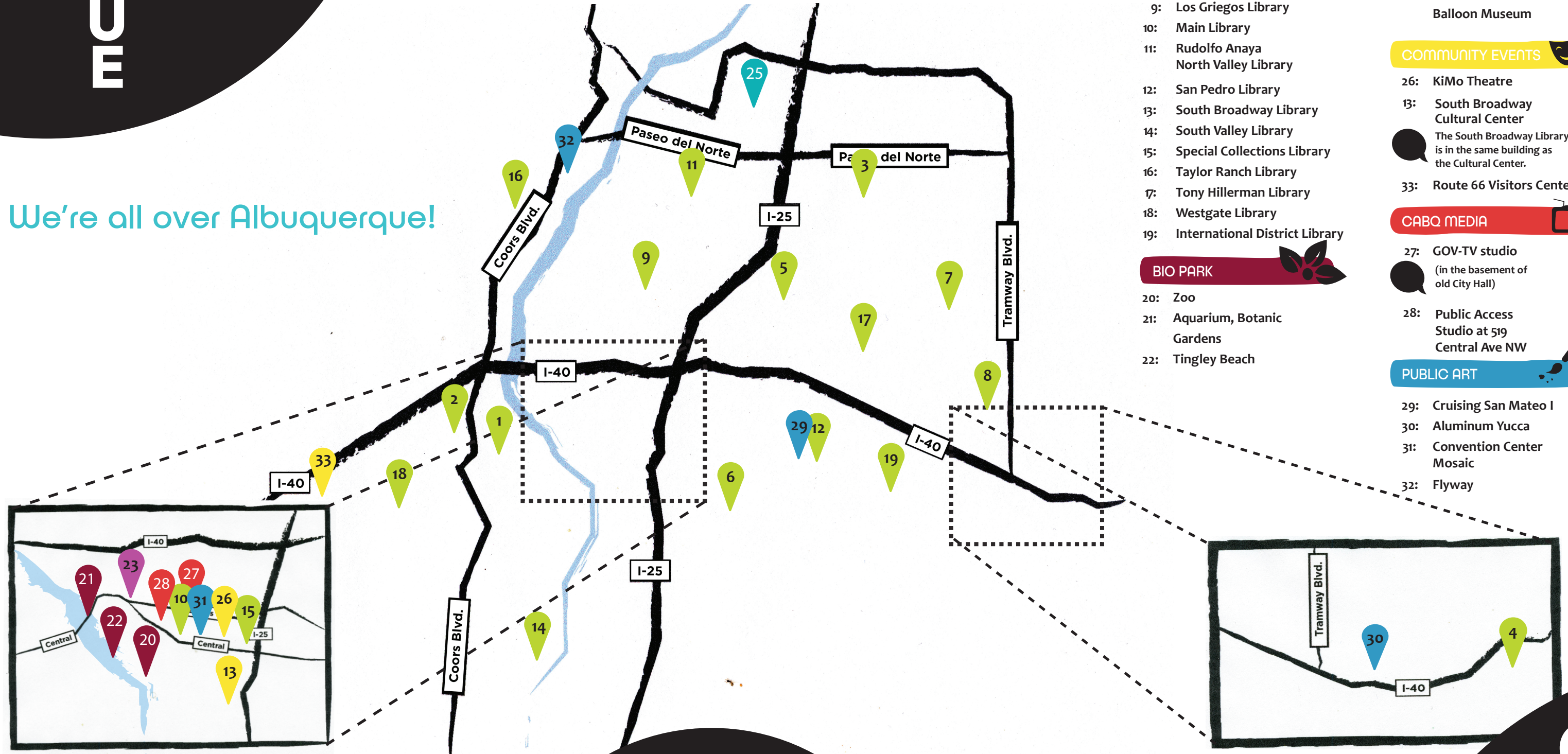
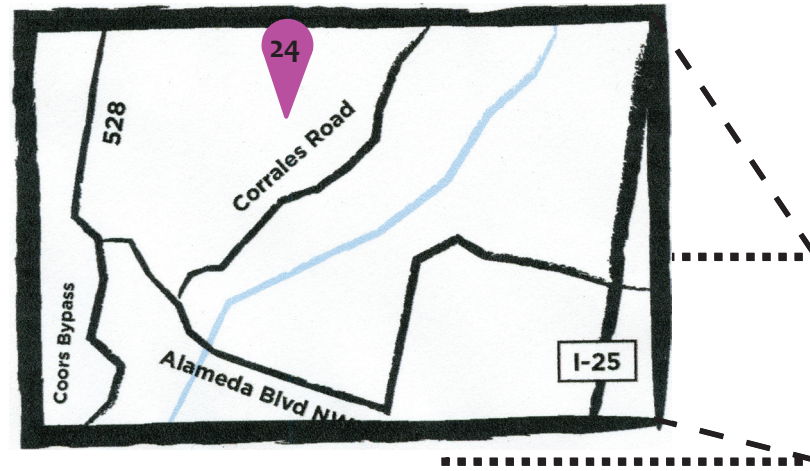
This report highlights many of the accomplishments that defined 2025 and reflects the dedication of our staff, volunteers, partners, artists, educators, and supporters. Together, these efforts strengthened our cultural institutions, expanded opportunities for community engagement, preserved the stories and places that make Albuquerque unique, and invested in a vibrant future for our city. While no annual report can capture every success, the following pages offer a look at the impact Arts & Culture made across Albuquerque throughout the year.



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
- The South Broadway Library is in the same building as the Cultural 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

In 2025, the ABQ BioPark continued to grow as a place where conservation, education, and community connection come to life through new spaces, meaningful experiences, and milestones.

After two years of careful renovation, the Heritage Farm at the Botanic Garden officially reopened in April, welcoming visitors back to a reimagined space that blends Albuquerque's agricultural heritage with hands-on discovery and sustainability. The refreshed farm experience includes expanded pastures, new barns, larger crops, and a mud play zone designed to inspire exploration. New residents, including Highland cattle and miniature donkeys, quickly became guest favorites, helping create an engaging environment that connects visitors to the region's agricultural roots.

The BioPark also marked an important step forward in wildlife conservation with the opening of the new Mexican Wolf Conservation Facility. This specialized, behind-the-scenes space supports the recovery of one of North America's most endangered mammals by providing natural, private habitats for breeding, pup-rearing, and rehabilitation. The facility represents a major investment in species recovery and reinforces the BioPark's leadership in conservation work that reaches far beyond Albuquerque.

In October, the Botanic Garden unveiled *Lebanon & Beyond*, a new immersive garden experience that explores the rich cultural and ecological connections between the Mediterranean and the American Southwest. Featuring Lebanese architectural elements and thoughtfully designed landscapes, the space invites visitors to experience how gardens can serve as places of cultural exchange, reflection, and discovery.

Art and conservation came together in a bold new way as the Zoo became the first and only site in the Southwest to join the Audubon Mural Project. Local artists transformed the walls of Raptor Roost and surrounding areas into vibrant murals celebrating New Mexico's bird populations while raising awareness of the impacts of climate change and habitat loss. These installations demonstrate how public art can inspire dialogue and deepen understanding of environmental stewardship.

The BioPark family also grew in memorable ways throughout the year. Hippo calf Maisy made an immediate splash after her October 14 birth, capturing the hearts of staff and guests alike. More than 46,400 public votes helped determine her name in what became one of Albuquerque's most joyful community moments of the year. Maisy was joined by gentoo penguin chicks, flamingos, and stingrays, while new residents including an American alligator, southern white rhino, and lined seahorses, further enriched the BioPark experience.

Behind the scenes, the BioPark's Aquatic Conservation Facility continued its essential work to protect the Rio Grande silvery minnow. Staff released more than 44,000 silvery minnows into the Rio Grande as part of the ongoing recovery program. Since joining this effort in 2000, the BioPark has played a critical role in helping sustain one of New Mexico's most important native species.

The BioPark also expanded opportunities for community connection through new events and celebrations that welcomed audiences of all ages. Highlights included Urban Wildlife Discovery Day, the sensory-friendly *Blooming with Pride* celebration, and the Zoo's first Indigenous Peoples Day event.





Albuquerque Museum

In 2025, Albuquerque Museum continued to strengthen its role as a steward of history, art, and community connection by expanding access to collections, presenting world-class exhibitions, and creating new opportunities for public engagement.

The Museum's collections team made significant strides in advancing a more accessible and actively documented collection for both staff and the public. This work included completing a full inventory of the History collection housed primarily in the Museum's central vault, expanding global access to more than 10,000 objects through the addition of approximately 20,000 images to the online collections database, and addressing rehousing needs for more than 750 objects to ensure their long-term preservation. The team also supported 12 installations across galleries, offices, and public spaces while implementing workflow improvements, including the creation of a dedicated photography studio and refined intake procedures for loans and acquisitions.

The Museum also welcomed international recognition as one of only three United States venues to host *Modern Art and Politics in Germany, 1910–1945*, a major exhibition organized by the National Gallery in Berlin. The exhibition drew more than 57,000 visitors in Albuquerque, surpassing attendance at its other U.S. venues, both located in significantly larger metropolitan areas. Klaus Biesenbach, director of the National Gallery in Berlin, remarked on Albuquerque's remarkable engagement, noting the exceptional turnout for public programming connected to the exhibition as a reflection of this community's deep enthusiasm for arts and culture.

Community connection continued to flourish through the Museum's free monthly Third Thursday events, which welcomed increasingly diverse audiences and presenters throughout the year. Partnerships with city, state, and national organizations expanded the reach

of these evenings while creating new opportunities for thematic programming. Staff also introduced creative approaches to sharing collections and research beyond traditional exhibition formats. A standout example was *The Odditorium*, a playful October pop-up experience that invited visitors to explore some of the Museum's most unusual historical objects through theatrical interpretation, immersive storytelling and hands-on engagement.

The Museum also continued to expand accessibility and inclusion across its spaces and programs. Improvements included the creation of a fragrance-free restroom, the introduction of color-correcting glasses to support richer engagement with artworks and historic objects, and the launch of evening tours for Deaf visitors in partnership with the Albuquerque Sign Language Academy. All exhibitions continue to feature bilingual labels, while large-format text remains available both onsite and online to support broader access for all visitors.

Educational programming remained a cornerstone of the Museum's work, with growing demand from educators for guided experiences that connect directly to classroom learning. Staff and guides collaborated with teachers to create highly customized visits that brought curriculum to life in innovative ways. At Casa San Ysidro, students explored traditional New Mexican lifeways through a walk along the Corrales acequia paired with lessons on Arabic-derived vocabulary still present in New Mexico Spanish.

These efforts reflect Albuquerque Museum's continued commitment to making history and art more accessible, dynamic and relevant by connecting collections to audiences while creating meaningful pathways for discovery and learning.



Anderson Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum

The Balloon Museum celebrated 20 years of inspiring wonder, discovery, and connection through the history, science, art, and sport of ballooning.

To mark this important anniversary, the Museum officially stepped into its next chapter with *20 Years of Joy*, a special temporary exhibition reflecting on two decades of innovation, community memories and educational impact. The exhibition invited visitors to explore the Museum's rich history, engage with the present moment and imagine the exciting future ahead for one of Albuquerque's most distinctive cultural institutions.

That forward-looking spirit was on full display during Balloon Fiesta 2025, when the Museum unveiled its newly renovated Anderson Family Theater, enhancing the visitor experience with a refreshed and modernized gathering space for films, presentations and educational programming. During the same celebratory week, the Museum hosted a ceremonial groundbreaking for its highly anticipated Outdoor Balloon Adventure, an exciting new project that will expand interactive learning opportunities and create dynamic outdoor experiences for future generations of visitors.

Behind the scenes, 2025 was a transformational year for the Museum's collections and archives. The collections team made extraordinary progress in documenting and organizing the Museum's holdings, significantly strengthening access to one of the world's most unique collections dedicated to ballooning history.

The year began with 20,197 records. By year's end, that number had grown to 34,565 records, with 80 percent of the collection, or 27,843 objects, successfully cataloged. This remarkable effort resulted in 14,368 new records created and more than 26,700 objects identified and documented.

The Museum also completed cataloging its library collection, revealing a rich and globally significant resource of 2,125 books, including 1,276 unique titles. The collection spans 13 languages, with English, French, and German most prominently represented, and reflects 17 distinct cultural perspectives, underscoring the international scope of the Balloon Museum.



One ABQ Media

One ABQ Media continued to play a central role in sharing the stories, milestones, and everyday moments that define Albuquerque. Through a combination of live production, digital platforms, and evolving storytelling tools, the division supported City departments in communicating with clarity, creativity, and transparency.

The team livestreamed more than 85 hours of public events, ensuring broader access to City programming and civic moments in real time. At Studio 519, expanded capacity and production support strengthened the City's ability to capture, produce, and distribute content across platforms, enhancing both internal communications and public-facing storytelling.

Digital engagement continued to grow significantly. One ABQ Media content reached more than 1.3 million views on YouTube, while ABQ ToDo expanded its role as a central community calendar, featuring more than 10,000 posted events throughout the year. Together, these platforms extended the City's reach well beyond the metro area, connecting residents and audiences with the full breadth of cultural and community activity across Albuquerque.

In addition to ongoing coverage, the division advanced several signature storytelling initiatives in 2025, including multimedia projects supporting the Route 66 Centennial Celebration and the Creative Bravos Awards. These efforts highlighted the people, places and creative energy that continue to shape Albuquerque's identity, while elevating community

voices through accessible, high-quality storytelling. As media tools and platforms continue to evolve, One ABQ Media refined internal workflows and embraced new technologies to remain responsive and efficient. These improvements strengthened the division's ability to support Citywide communications while ensuring content remains inclusive, timely and impactful.

Through its expanding digital reach and commitment to public storytelling, One ABQ Media continues to amplify Albuquerque's civic life by connecting residents to their city and each other across platforms and communities.





Community Events

Community Events continued to create and maintain gathering points for residents and visitors, bringing people together across neighborhoods, traditions, and seasons while supporting local creative and economic activity.

The year was highlighted by a record-breaking Old Town Holiday Stroll, where unprecedented crowds gathered to celebrate the start of the holiday season and count down the lighting of the tree in one of Albuquerque's most cherished annual traditions. Throughout the year, community outdoor events collectively welcomed more than 230,000 guests, creating vibrant, accessible experiences that showcased the city's cultural energy and strengthened connections across communities.

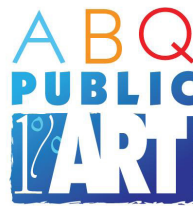
These large-scale events also continued to serve as a vital platform for local economic impact, providing visibility and opportunity for 271 local businesses. Artisans, food vendors, breweries, distillers and wineries, all participated throughout the season, helping transform public events into dynamic marketplaces that celebrate local creativity and entrepreneurship.

The historic KiMo Theatre also continued to shine as both a cultural landmark and an increasingly important production and programming venue. In 2025, the venue hosted 74 events and an additional 23 uses, including filming projects and guided tours, welcoming more than 28,000 visitors into one of Albuquerque's most iconic spaces. Attendance and utilization continued to rise, marking a 40 percent increase since 2022 (after fully reopening after COVID-19) and reflecting sustained momentum in public engagement.

As Albuquerque prepared for the Route 66 Centennial, the KiMo Theatre also drew growing attention from historians, filmmakers, and cultural producers interested in the city's architectural and cinematic legacy. Its distinctive Pueblo Deco design, deep historical significance, and strong visual identity have made it an increasingly sought-after location for storytelling and film projects exploring the cultural landscape of the Southwest and the Mother Road era.

Together, these programs and places reflect the strength of Albuquerque's civic culture, where historic venues, large-scale public celebrations, and local creative enterprises come together to shape shared experiences and build lasting community pride.





Public Art | Urban Enhancement

Public Art Urban Enhancement Division experienced a dynamic year of growth and innovation, shaped by new leadership, deeper community engagement, and the continued expansion of Albuquerque's Public Art collection. Through strategic partnerships and forward-thinking programming, the division strengthened its connections with artists, residents, and visitors while advancing its mission to integrate art meaningfully into everyday life.

City Hall's Gallery One remained a central hub for public engagement, welcoming more than 2,000 visitors over the course of the year. The gallery presented five exhibitions featuring 50 artists and hosted the City of Albuquerque Employee Art Show, highlighting the creative work of 67 City employees. Public Art staff also expanded educational outreach through a range of tours and site visits, engaging elementary and high school students, Central New Mexico Community College portfolio students, and a young adult delegation from Korea.

A significant shift in 2025 was the introduction of artist- and community-led curation within Gallery One. For the first time, artists and local arts organizations were invited to shape exhibitions in the space, opening new pathways for expression and ensuring a broader range of voices and perspectives were represented. This reflects the division's ongoing commitment to inclusivity, shared authorship, and community-driven programming.

Supporting working artists remained central to the division's mission. In 2025, more than 50 artworks were added to the Public Art Collection through commissions, donations, and acquisitions, continuing the steady growth of Albuquerque's cultural assets. At the same time, the division maintained a strong focus

on stewardship and preservation, completing routine maintenance and cleaning across more than 1,600 artworks and undertaking multiple major conservation efforts to ensure the long-term care of the collection.

The Urban Enhancement Trust Fund (UETF) continued to serve as a critical resource for Albuquerque's creative ecosystem, awarding funding to 30 nonprofit organizations supporting arts and cultural programming across the city. In addition to its standard grant cycle, UETF supported two nonprofit organizations serving as fiscal sponsors and mentors for Resiliency Residency III, a program that will ultimately support the work of 16 local artists and strengthen long-term creative resilience in the community.

Interdepartmental collaboration also expanded in 2025, including work with the City's Planning Department to engage residents in westside Community Planning Areas. These efforts helped connect neighborhoods with cultural resources and programming, ensuring broader access to public art opportunities and deepening civic participation.

Together, these initiatives reflect a year of purposeful expansion and creative investment as one that strengthened Albuquerque's public art infrastructure while broadening access, elevating local artists, and reinforcing the role of art in shaping the city's identity and future.



Public Library – Albuquerque/Bernalillo County

The Public Library marked a landmark year defined by major anniversaries, renewed community spaces and continued expansion of programs that connect residents to learning, creativity and opportunity.

Two cornerstone institutions reached extraordinary milestones. Main Library celebrated its 50th anniversary as a central hub for literacy, research, and connection. At the same time, Special Collections Library marked 100 years of preserving the city's historical record, safeguarding archives, photographs, and cultural materials that document a century of Albuquerque's evolving story. Together, these anniversaries underscored the Library's dual role as both a living community resource and a long-term steward of local history.

Across the system, branch libraries continued to evolve as accessible, welcoming community spaces. The Alamosa Branch Library celebrated its grand reopening following a short closure, unveiling a refreshed interior that includes new carpeting, fresh paint, and updated furnishings designed to enhance comfort and usability for patrons of all ages.

Public art integration across library spaces also continued to grow through collaboration with both the City's Public Art Division and Bernalillo County's Public Art program. New installations and expansions brought artwork into everyday library environments, including the continued presence of *Paige* as a permanent installation at Main Library and new public art additions at the South Valley and East Mountain branch libraries. These efforts reinforce the role of libraries as cultural spaces where art and learning intersect.

The Library also deepened its commitment to sustainability and food literacy through its seed library and the expansion of the Community Bucket Garden program, which demonstrates how residents can

grow food in small or limited spaces. These hands-on resources continue to support community resilience and self-sufficiency.

Signature programs remained a cornerstone of engagement. The Summer Reading Program once again encouraged thousands of children, teens and adults to maintain learning momentum throughout the summer months through reading, activities and community events designed to inspire lifelong learning.

Community partnerships also expanded, including ongoing collaboration with the ABQ BioPark to deliver interdisciplinary programming that connects literacy, science, and environmental education across multiple City sites.

Together, these milestones and initiatives reflect a year of celebration and renewal for the Public Library system and a continued commitment to meeting the evolving needs of Albuquerque's diverse communities.





Spotlight On... A year of milestones in arts and culture.

While the Department of Arts & Culture celebrated significant anniversaries of its own in 2025, the year also highlighted the strength and longevity of Albuquerque's broader art and culture landscape.

Across the city, cultural institutions marked important milestones that reflect decades of investment in preserving heritage, fostering creativity, and building community. Together, these anniversaries served as a reminder that Albuquerque's cultural ecosystem is one of the city's greatest assets, shaped by the work of artists, educators, cultural leaders, and community members across generations.

Among the most notable milestones was the 25th anniversary of the National Hispanic Cultural Center, which opened its doors in 2000 and has since become a nationally recognized destination for arts, history, humanities and cultural exchange. For a quarter century, the center has connected local audiences with artists, scholars and performers from across the Hispanic world while serving as an anchor institution in Albuquerque's South Valley.

The year also offered an opportunity to recognize organizations and places that have helped shape Albuquerque's cultural identity over generations. Keshet Dance & Center for the Arts celebrated 30 years of advancing artistic excellence, arts education and accessibility through innovative programming that has earned national recognition.

2025 also marked the approach of a major milestone for the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, which began preparing for its 50th anniversary celebration in 2026. Since opening in 1976 under the leadership of New Mexico's 19 Pueblos, the center has served as a vital gathering place for preserving, sharing and celebrating Pueblo culture, art, history and language.

Within the Department of Arts & Culture, milestone celebrations underscored the enduring value of public institutions that serve residents every day. Casa San Ysidro commemorated 150 years of history at its Corrales site, honoring a landmark that preserves and interprets the traditions, architecture and daily life of New Mexico's past.

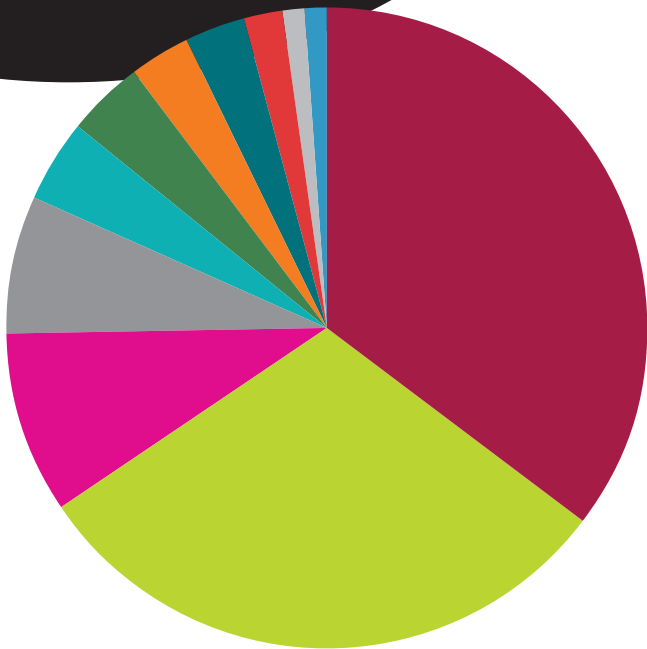
Main Library celebrated 50 years as a cornerstone of literacy, learning and civic life, while Special Collections Library marked its centennial year, honoring 100 years of preserving the stories, documents, and artifacts that help tell Albuquerque's history. South Valley Library also celebrated 35 years of service, continuing its legacy as a neighborhood gathering place and educational resource.

The Balloon Museum marked its 20th anniversary, celebrating two decades of inspiring curiosity through the history, science and adventure of ballooning while looking ahead to new investments in exhibits, facilities and educational programming.

Together, these milestones tell a larger story. They reflect a city that values its history while continually investing in the future; a community that understands cultural institutions are not only places to visit, but places where identity is preserved, stories are shared and connections are formed.

As Albuquerque prepared for this year's Route 66 Centennial and other major celebrations ahead, 2025 offered an opportunity to honor the institutions that have helped shape the city's cultural landscape for decades and, in some cases, centuries. Their continued success reflects the creativity, resilience and community spirit that define Albuquerque and position the city for an exciting future.

budget and IMPACT



Total FY 2025
Operating Budget
\$52,649,000

ABQ BioPark

\$17,986,000 34%

Explora

\$1,792,000 3%

Public Library
Albuquerque and
Bernalillo County

\$16,590,000 32%

Anderson Abruzzo
Albuquerque International
Balloon Museum

\$1,785,000 3%

Albuquerque Museum

\$4,188,000 8%

CABQ Media

\$1,174,000 2%

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

\$2,784,000 5%

Public Art/Urban
Enhancement

\$844,000 2%

Sponsored Events
and Partnerships

\$3,046,000 6%

Youth Initiatives

\$335,000 1%

Strategic Support
(admin)

\$2,135,000 4%