Department of Cultural Affairs
State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

Debra Garcia y Griego
Cabinet Secretary

April 27, 2026

Dear Stakeholders:

Administrative Services

Farm & Ranch Heritage Museum

Historic Preservation

Museum of Indian Arts & Culture/Laboratory of Anthropology

Museum of International Folk Art

Museum Resources

National Hispanic Cultural Center

New Mexico Arts

New Mexico Historic Sites

New Mexico History Museum/Palace of the Governors

New Mexico Museum of Art

New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science

New Mexico Museum of Space History

New Mexico State Library

Office of Archaeological Studies

It is with great pride that the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) presents the *2026 Española Lowrider Museum Feasibility Study*. This study was initiated in response to interest from members of the New Mexico State Legislature and the community to formally acknowledge Española's status as the "Lowrider Capital of the World." Recognizing that lowriding is a quintessential New Mexican art form—rooted in family, craftsmanship, and cultural identity—DCA engaged a team of architects, cost estimators, and cultural consultants to assess how a state-supported or community-led institution might best honor and sustain this unique heritage.

The study confirms a strong community desire for a dedicated cultural institution and indicates that such a museum could attract between 40,000 and 60,000 annual visitors. This level of visitation would make the museum a significant driver of economic development and cultural preservation in Northern New Mexico.

The report outlines a vision for an institution that functions less like a static gallery and more like a vibrant community hub. Stakeholders overwhelmingly support a "living museum" model—one that integrates historical interpretation with active STEAM education and workforce development. In this setting, traditional preservation intersects with hands-on mastery of upholstery, hydraulics, and pinstriping, ensuring the artistry of lowriding is passed to the next generation. This approach positions the museum as a catalyst for the revitalization of downtown Española, with the potential to stimulate the local economy, create new jobs, and anchor a thriving regional tourism network. To achieve this level of impact, the study estimates the need for 18 to 25 professional staff members and an annual operating budget of $2 million to $3 million.

Realizing this vision, however, requires addressing several complex challenges. Stewarding a permanent vehicle collection, for example,

introduces significant capital costs and strict environmental control requirements; the study identifies a non-collecting model as a viable way to reduce these burdens while maintaining flexibility. In addition, the most promising site options involve extensive infrastructure needs and potential environmental remediation that will require coordinated planning. Ultimately, the museum's long-term success will depend on its ability to balance two imperatives: serving as a world-class destination for international tourists while remaining deeply rooted in the local community through authentic, rotating content and engaging programs.

With the completion of this feasibility study, DCA's current scope of work is concluded. The project has reached a point where further study without structural commitment would not be productive. Advancing the museum using public funds will require a sustained commitment that includes a formal governance structure, a recurring operational funding stream, and significant capital investment.

While the report emphasizes Española, the lowrider tradition—and its profound ties to cultural identity, artistic innovation, and STEAM education—resonates statewide. DCA has a strong track record and the expertise necessary to make the development of a new state-run museum a viable path forward. However, an actionable next phase depends on a clear decision about the institutional framework. Many of the next steps identified in this plan, such as site selection and pilot programming, can proceed concurrently with efforts to formalize that structure.

The path ahead now rests with elected officials and policymakers. Realizing this vision will require a collective, decisive effort across both the executive and legislative branches to move beyond the study phase and toward a permanent commitment to New Mexico's cultural heritage.

Sincerely,

Debra García y Griego
Cabinet Secretary

ESPAÑOLA LOWRIDER MUSEUM FEASIBILITY STUDY

STATE OF NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARCH 2026



SSA | sam sterling architecture, llc.

Levi Romero
cultural consultant

Jessica Roybal
cultural consultant

AK Cultural Planning
museum consultant

Balis & Company
cost consultant

PROJECT TEAM

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
Jessie Greenspan

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
Susan K. Herrera, State Representative
Leo Jaramillo, State Senator

ARCHITECTURE - SAM STERLING ARCHITECTURE
Sam Sterling, AIA, Principal
Samantha Swavely, Project Manager
Raquel Pacheco, Co-Project Manager

MUSEUM CONSULTANT - AK CULTURAL PLANNING
Amy Kaufman, Principal
Mariluz Hoyos, Senior Consultant

COMMUNITY & CULTURAL CONSULTANTS
Jessica Roybal
Levi Romero

COST CONSULTANT - BALIS AND COMPANY
Jon Balis, Cost Estimator

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *5*

i. A Lowrider Museum in Española
ii. Regional Connectivity & Context
iii. Engagement Process And Approach
iv. Community Event & Input (Cruise And Kickback)
v. Project Overview

II. MUSEUM FRAMEWORK *12*

i. Research Methodology and Headlines
ii. Concept for a New Lowrider Museum in Española
iii. Partnerships and Collaboration
iv. Considering a Collection
v. Target Audiences
vi. Museum Governance
vii. Preliminary Attendance and Budget Ranges
viii. Next Steps

III. POTENTIAL LOCATIONS ANALYSIS *61*

i. Overview
ii. Potential Sites
iii. Site Analysis Criteria Matrix

IV. ROUGH ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COST *70*

i. Preliminary Cost Estimates

V. APPENDIX *72*

i. Regional Context And National Comparable Cases Research, October 20, 2025
ii. Community Survey Findings: December 9, 2025
iii. Key Insights From Interviews With Regional And National Leaders

VI. REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS *131*

"A Lowrider Museum in Española, the Lowrider Capital of the World, would preserve our culture, celebrate our creativity, and tell the story of a community that turned passion into art and heritage into legacy."

Senator Leo Jaramillo, Senate Majority Caucus Chair

Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

I.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

A LOWRIDER MUSEUM IN ESPAÑOLA

Española is known as the "Lowrider Capital of the World," and is the heart of a vibrant tradition rooted in craftsmanship, faith, and family. A dedicated Lowrider Museum will preserve and celebrate this legacy while strengthening education, tourism, and cultural pride across New Mexico. Guided by decades of community advocacy and expertise, this feasibility study outlines a path toward a resilient, community-centered museum that honors the past and inspires future generations.

COMMUNITY VISION

Efforts to establish a dedicated Lowrider Museum in Española have been a long-standing community priority, supported by passionate individuals, local organizations, and strong advocacy from state leadership. With funding secured by Representative Susan Herrera and Senator Leo Jaramillo, the NM Legislature authorized a feasibility study to evaluate the project's cultural, economic, and operational potential. The NM Department of Cultural Affairs engaged SSA to conduct this work and provide the research needed to understand what it takes to build and run a museum, from cost and content development to long-term operations.

MUSEUM GOALS

Working with NMDCA, our planning team establishes the vision and goals for the proposed Lowrider Museum by evaluating how it serves the community through visitor experience, cultural interpretation, and programs rooted in local identity. The analysis considers how key audiences; residents, visitors, youth, tourists, and local Car Clubs, engage with exhibitions and events that represent lowrider culture. Because the site is not yet determined, the team identifies potential locations within Española and develops a criteria matrix to define the facility needs regardless of location. This work provides the foundational requirements and direction for a museum that reflects the values and aspirations of the lowrider community.

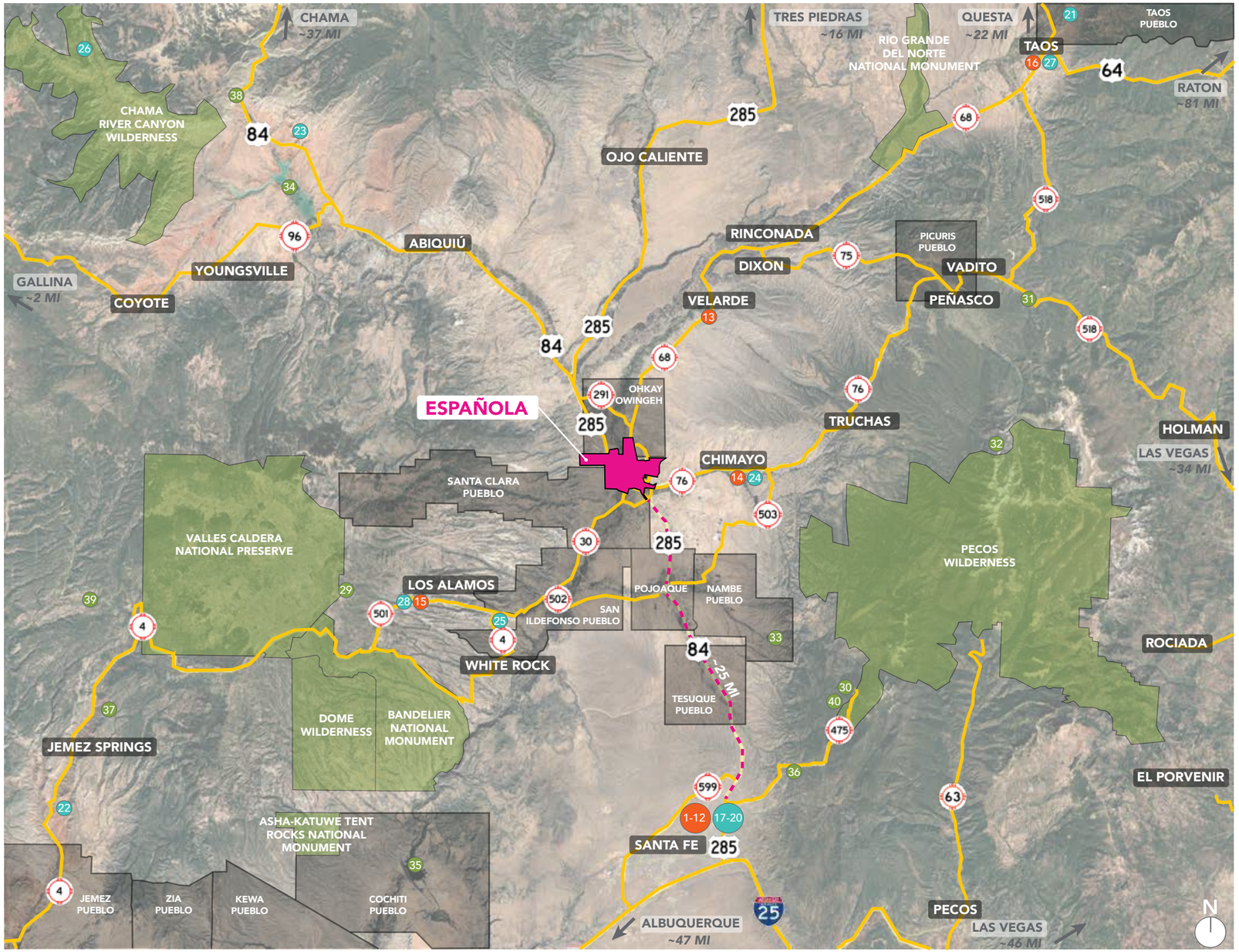


Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY & CONTEXT

Northern New Mexico is a unique region defined by art, culture, history, and outdoor attractions that draw visitors from around the world. From renowned art institutions in both Santa Fe and Taos and centuries-old cultural traditions in the Northern Pueblos and at the Santuario de Chimayo, to vibrant local communities and expansive recreational landscapes, the region offers a layered experience rooted in place.

Lowrider culture is an integral part of this same heritage- an expression of craft, identity, and community that has long been embedded in the fabric of Northern New Mexico.
Situating a lowrider museum within this context, particularly in Española - positioned between the major destinations of Santa Fe and Taos - aligns naturally with the region's cultural landscape. A museum here would not only honor a locally born tradition but also strengthen the regional network of attractions, offering visitors an additional, authentic lens through which to understand Northern New Mexico.



LEGEND

Museums & Galleries

1. Georgia O'Keefe Museum
2. New Mexico Museum of Art
3. New Mexico Military Museum
4. Museum of Indian Arts & Culture
5. Museum of International Folk Art
6. Mus. of the American Indian
7. NM Heritage Arts Museum
8. SITE Santa Fe
9. NM History Museum
10. Canyon Rd.
11. Mus. Contemporary Native Arts
12. Meow Wolf
13. Classical Gas Museum
14. Chimayo Museum
15. Bradbury Science Museum
16. Harwood Museum of Art

History & Culture

17. Santa Fe Plaza
18. San Miguel Chapel
19. Lorreto Chapel
20. Basilica St. Francis Assisi
21. Taos Pueblo
22. Jemez Historic Site
23. Ghost Ranch
24. Santuario de Chimayo
25. Tsankawi Ruins
26. Monastery of Christ in the Desert
27. Taos Plaza
28. Los Alamos Project Main Gate

Recreation

29. Pajarito Mountain Ski Area
30. Ski Santa Fe
31. Sipapu Ski & Summer Resort
32. Trampas Lakes
33. Nambe Waterfalls
34. Abiquiú Lake
35. Cochiti Lake
36. Hyde Memorial State Park
37. Jemez Recreation Area
38. Echo Amphitheater
39. Fenton Lake
40. Aspen Vista

Northern New Mexico Context Map

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND APPROACH

The engagement process, grounded in local insight, is essential to shaping a meaningful and effective plan. Input from community members, cultural leaders, and program partners guide the direction of the study, ensuring that the resulting framework reflects lived experience, regional knowledge, and real programmatic needs. Our museum consultants support this work through a Museum Framework, including a high-level inventory of regional programs, tourism and market trends, governance approaches, and financial benchmarks.

Throughout the process, we draw on the deep cultural expertise of Jessica Roybal and Levi Romero, whose guidance helps ensure that the work remains rooted in community priorities and that the study is both grassroots-driven and professionally guided.

- **Core Institutional and Government Partners**
  Engage primary contract facilitators and civic leaders, including the client, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, State Representatives and Senators, as well as the Española City Manager.
- **Regional and National Cultural Organizations**
  Engage key cultural and institutional partners, including national museums, state owned institutions such as the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Museum of International Folk Art, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, and the NM Tourism Department.
- **Community and Local Stakeholders**
  Involve local voices and community-based participants, including local car clubs, families, teachers, students, local residents, artists, muralists, gallery owners, and local show organizers.



SSA, Jessica Roybal, and Levi Romero visiting UNM's Lobos y Lowrider Event



SSA Site Visit to Petersen Auto Museum



Site Visit with NMDCA, State Representative, and Full Consultant Team



Kickoff Meeting with Full Consultant Team and client at NNMC



Cruise ride with local car clubs and locals during Cruise and Kickback Event



Cruise and Kickback Event at North New Mexico Collage

COMMUNITY EVENT & INPUT

CRUISE AND KICKBACK NOVEMBER 14, 2025

We worked closely with the client to host a community event that celebrated Española's lowrider culture and invited local voices into the conversation. The event featured local food vendors, a folklorico dance performance, and participation from local car clubs, beginning with a cruise escorted by the Española Police through town before gathering in the parking lot of Northern New Mexico College. Senator Leo Jaramillo, Representative Susan Herrera, and Patricia Trujillo, New Mexico Higher Education Department Deputy Cabinet Secretary and professor of Chicana/Chicano studies, gave opening remarks to introduce the team and the project. From there, we connected with locals, educators, and families to discuss what a lowrider museum in Española could mean for the community. Along with collecting survey responses, we also had meaningful conversations about the history of lowriding in Española and the personal stories and connections people have to it.















PROJECT OVERVIEW

This study was prepared at the direction the NM State Legislature to help the Department of Cultural affairs evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Lowrider Museum in Española and identify the site best suited to support that vision. The final product brings together site analysis, feasibility considerations, market research, and community engagement findings to guide future decision-making. SSA, as the local architecture team, researched potential sites and provided insight into local conditions, permitting, and regional context. AK Cultural Planning contributed national museum expertise and completed marketing research to help assess audience, visibility, and long-term potential. Jessica Roybal and Levi Romero, as local community partners, helped ground the study in Española's cultural context by supporting outreach, sharing local knowledge, and helping ensure the project reflects community priorities. Our goal with this analysis is to highlight the strengths and opportunities of each site, determine which location is the strongest fit, and provide the client with a clear foundation for moving forward with a museum that best serves the local community.



Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

"Establishing a world-class museum in Española would serve as a cornerstone for the community, celebrating and preserving the valley's distinctive culture and heritage."

Representative Susan Herrera

II.
MUSEUM FRAMEWORK

Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

Feasibility Study for Lowrider Museum in Española, NM

Museum Framework



Photo: Jack Parsons, '63 Impala, owner Lee Córdova of Alcalde, 1998. Source: Department of Cultural Affairs

“People drive their cars around; you see these lowriders with the incredibly beautiful backdrop: the dramatic landscape of these mountains. They’re just so stunning, you know? You see that nowhere else.

The lowrider community in Española is unique. Here you find a one-of-a-kind collection of cars from beautifully preserved classic dating back to the 1900s, meticulously customized vehicles. They're always different, on an ordinary day, you might not see them cruising the streets, but wait for a holiday weekend, and the magic begins. The garages open, and the engines roar to life…

The pride within the community is powerful, and the stories behind each car are as rich and colorful as the vehicles themselves.”

—Regional cultural center leader

“People, young and old, throughout New Mexico and the world have to have a place to comprehend about the artistic and engineering abilities these men, women, and children depict. How do we expect to pass down and document our heritage and traditions if we don’t preserve the traditions and personal narratives? It has to be available, not only for the current generation, but generations to come. We have to document it, share it, brag about it, and let the world know. We can’t let this fade…”

—Local community member

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND HEADLINES

Market and Opportunity Assessment: Methodology

The goal of the Market and Opportunity Assessment research was to provide a snapshot of national peer automotive museums and the regional cultural landscape in which the future Lowrider Museum will operate.

An overview of the operating scale of these existing peer institutions was also included to inform planning in subsequent phases of this project.

Regional Context and National Comparable Cases Research (Appendix A)

- Regional Peers: A snapshot of peer museums and cultural institutions in Santa Fe and Taos, and a list of local attractions.
- National Peers: Automotive museums located throughout the U.S., ranging from small to large in scale, with a sample selected for each, and case studies for 3 comparable peer automotive museums.
- Relevant Exhibitions and Events: A sample of recent lowrider exhibitions, both locally and nationally.

A listening session and a **Community survey (Appendix B), which included 144 respondents, focused on visioning elements, defining the visitor experience,** and audience opportunities.

Individual interviews with 12 regional and national leaders (Appendix C) captured experts' advice on institutional and interpretative opportunities, challenges, and programming innovations.

This research lays the groundwork for the development of the concept, assessment of market demand, and institutional considerations presented in this report, and future planning work.

Research headlines are presented in the following pages.

RESEARCH HEADLINES: Regional and National Context

Research on regional cultural institutions, relevant national museums, and recent exhibitions focused on lowriders yield the following key insights:

1. Exhibitions featuring lowriders at regional and national museums, including peer institutions, have become increasingly popular in recent years.
2. Lowriders are an appealing subject for various types of museums (automobile, art/design, history), and while they may use their own lenses, most exhibition treatments strive to engage more fully with lowrider culture.
3. Participative public programs and community events are key to reflecting the living culture and welcoming families. The most popular programming involved rides, demonstrations, and "making" activities.
4. Regionally, cultural institutions are clustered in Santa Fe and Taos, with few offerings in Española and surrounding towns.
5. Regional attendance ranges from under 10,000 for smaller local attractions to 150,000 at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, which thrives on tourism. The median attendance at peer museums in Santa Fe is approximately 47K and 22K in Taos.
6. Nationally, automotive museums can be broken into 4 categories according to scale and programming levels. Preliminary thinking indicates that the most comparable to the future Española Lowrider Museum are mid-sized museums with significant programming offerings, which tend to attract between 44K and 63K people annually and have operating budgets ranging from $800K to $2M.
7. Members of Española's lowrider community have accomplished important work over the past decade towards the Lowrider Museum – organizing activities, raising awareness and pride in Española's lowrider culture, and nurturing potential state support. These efforts have laid an important foundation for the Museum's development.

RESEARCH HEADLINES: Community Survey

Findings from 144 responses to the community survey administered in November 2025:

1. **A thoughtfully planned Lowrider Museum is widely viewed as a community building asset and a way to elevate Española's profile as a lowrider destination**. Respondents noted its potential to connect to the broader automotive culture and attract local, regional, and national visitors, while emphasizing the importance of sustainable planning and funding.
2. **Survey participants have a significant interest in visiting museums, suggesting a strong potential audience for museum programming.**
3. **Interest in a lowrider themed museum is notably high, with significant enthusiasm for viewing lowriders on display.** Programming preferences leaned heavily toward community events and festivals as well as art exhibits and performances with significant interest in family days and afterschool youth programs.
4. **Planning and development priorities were identified as having space for outdoor exhibits or car shows and easy parking for visitors and events.** Importance was also placed on adequate utilities, infrastructure, and space for community programs and gatherings.
5. **Local community members – including car enthusiasts, experts, and car clubs – were identified as key to the planning and development process.** Respondents emphasized the depth of available expertise and the broad perspectives on car culture within the community, noting that many would welcome the opportunity to be actively engaged.

RESEARCH HEADLINES: Interviews with regional and national leaders

Insights from interviews with 12 regional and national leaders were focused on 5 areas:

1. The Lowrider Museum must feel welcoming, especially for communities historically excluded from museums and mainstream culture. Interviewees advised offering dynamic, changing exhibitions, informal hangout spaces, and multigenerational family-friendly experiences so that visitors of all ages feel recognized, comfortable, and keen to return.

2. Lowriding is understood as collective and community-centered, rooted in family and shared history rather than individual showmanship alone. A focus on relationships, mutual support, and intergenerational collaboration would help position the institution as a hub for car clubs, families, and community groups.

3. Lowrider culture must be presented within its historical, social, and political context, not as spectacle or novelty. Content must address internal migration, racial violence, resistance, identity formation, and pride, helping both insiders and first-time visitors grasp how lowriding embodies cultural affirmation, creativity, and political agency.

4. Questions about whose voices are heard and representation are central, with strong calls to ground curatorial authority in community expertise. Make sure to include lowrider builders, local families, Native communities, and women as knowledge-holders, and to embrace multiple narratives to avoid aggrandizing single-point of view stories or romanticized versions of the past.

5. Workforce development was seen by most leaders as a powerful opportunity, which aligns with how skills have long been passed down in lowrider culture. Leaders recommended to start recruiting early (middle school); provide caring mentors and stipends for older youth; and open pathways into trades, higher education, and museum careers.

6. Strong partnerships - with car clubs, community organizations, schools, cultural institutions, and private industry - are seen as essential to the museum's success. Interviewees urged creating advisory structures led by community experts, leveraging existing programs rather than "going it alone," and pursuing cross-museum initiatives and collaborations with the private sector to expand reach and impact.

“This museum would be a unique contribution to the Española Valley and to El Condado de Río Arriba, places of grand historical significance en Nuevo México. There is a significant stigma that exists towards this beautiful querencia, her people, i.e., and I see a healing of this through art, for example, the artwork that is lowriders, the work that goes into each ranfla is a source of pride for our people here in the valle. If art can improve on how Española is viewed, which it can, as it has for the santeros, tin workers, sculptors, musicians, and muralists that have existed here, and continue to exist, then the art of the lowrider can be a vehicle for moving forward into a sustainable economic future for many, podrá ser. So, I 100% support the creation of a Lowrider Museo in this homeland.”

—Local community member

"This project is about inviting Chicanas/os, culture, and our ways of gathering into an organized space, which Chicanas/os have historically been excluded. That's part of why people started lowriding, que no? To claim public space.

This museum must be alive, which questions even calling it a museum. But it should be a participatory, public space to celebrate a living culture.

I know everyone is salivating at the potential for tourism dollars. I get it. But this needs to be about our gente first. If we get that right, then everything else will come together. If we go the commodification route, this ain't gon' last. We need to ponte trucha."

—Government official

“The museum will be a place for lowriders to show their creations and share their inspiration for the art of building lowriders. It will nurture a sense of camaraderie and shared identity and cultivate community solidarity and pride. The lowrider museum will be a gathering place for storytelling to affirm a shared history, a forum for honoring individuals who have contributed to the lowrider identity, and for inviting a wide public to investigate, experience, and support the lowriding phenomenon as a pillar of New Mexican identity.”

—Local community member and original board member

CONCEPT FOR A NEW LOWRIDER MUSEUM IN ESPAÑOLA

Concept Snapshot

Honoring a living culture, the lowrider museum will not be a traditional museum; the past will be firmly connected to the present through dynamic storytelling and engagement.

A unique combination of an automobile museum, a history museum, and an arts and culture center that promotes active creation and generates dialogue.

Featuring high-quality exhibitions, programs, and events of regional, national, and international relevance.

Goals

1. Record, preserve, and display lowrider history
2. Honor and celebrate Española's and New Mexico's lowrider past and present
3. Support lowrider cultural traditions, community bonds, and well-being
4. Inspire creativity, empower lowrider creators, and nurture younger generations
5. Activate and strengthen local trades through the development of skills and links to contemporary art and design
6. Contribute to Española's economic development through job creation and increased tourism

These goals will inform the mission and vision. The building blocks for a mission and a vision, presented in the following pages, are provided as a starting point for engagement with primary stakeholders in future phases.

Building Blocks of a Mission

> *A mission defines the museum's unique identity and purpose, and provides a distinct focus for the institution. It articulates the museum's understanding of its role and responsibility to the public and its collections, and reflects the environment in which it exists. The museum's activities should directly or indirectly support the mission.*
>
> American Association of Museums

The following points outline key elements expected to evolve into a future mission:

- Preserve, celebrate, and advance lowrider culture through exhibitions, programs, and learning and community events for all ages.
- Honor the rich heritage and traditions of Española and New Mexico as a living expression of community resilience, artistic excellence, and technical ingenuity.
- Empower creators to continue building and innovating.
- Serve as a welcoming hub where personal and collective memory, cultural pride, and creative expression converge to strengthen community bonds and inspire future generations.

These elements will be further explored by primary stakeholders in the following phases. Once developed, the mission will be approved by the museum's governing authority.

Building Blocks for a Vision

An institutional vision describes the desired impact or future that the Museum aims to achieve. The following are key elements expected to evolve into a future vision:

- A vibrant cultural hub that upholds Española's identity as the Lowrider Capital of the World.
- A place where the history, art, engineering, and living traditions of lowriding are celebrated with the respect and recognition they deserve.
- A destination for learning, creation, and cultural exchange, where youth develop skills rooted in tradition, the local community builds connections across generations, and the broader public discovers the profound cultural significance of lowriding for New Mexican and Chicana/o identities.
- Contributing to community healing and the economic vitality of Española and Northern New Mexico.

These elements will be further explored by primary stakeholders in the following phases. Once developed, the vision will be approved by the museum's governing authority.

"Honor and represent the past but to provide the resources for the future. How do we create a place where young people can go and relate to history? How do we nurture the community that already exists and the future of that community to carry on this history?" —Local artist

"The content needs to be able to traverse the complexity of the feelings and the history, for both a viewer that's incredibly knowledgeable – because they're from the community and building it themselves. And also, people who do not know what they're walking into and are learning about it for the first time" —Regional curator

"How are the topics that are shown relevant to the local community? You always need to have a strong local community, and then regional, and then you can also become a destination. If local people care, and if you do work in a high-quality way, you will bring tourism as well" —National museum leader

"75% of the local population will visit the first two weeks of the museum opening. What happens after that?" —local community member

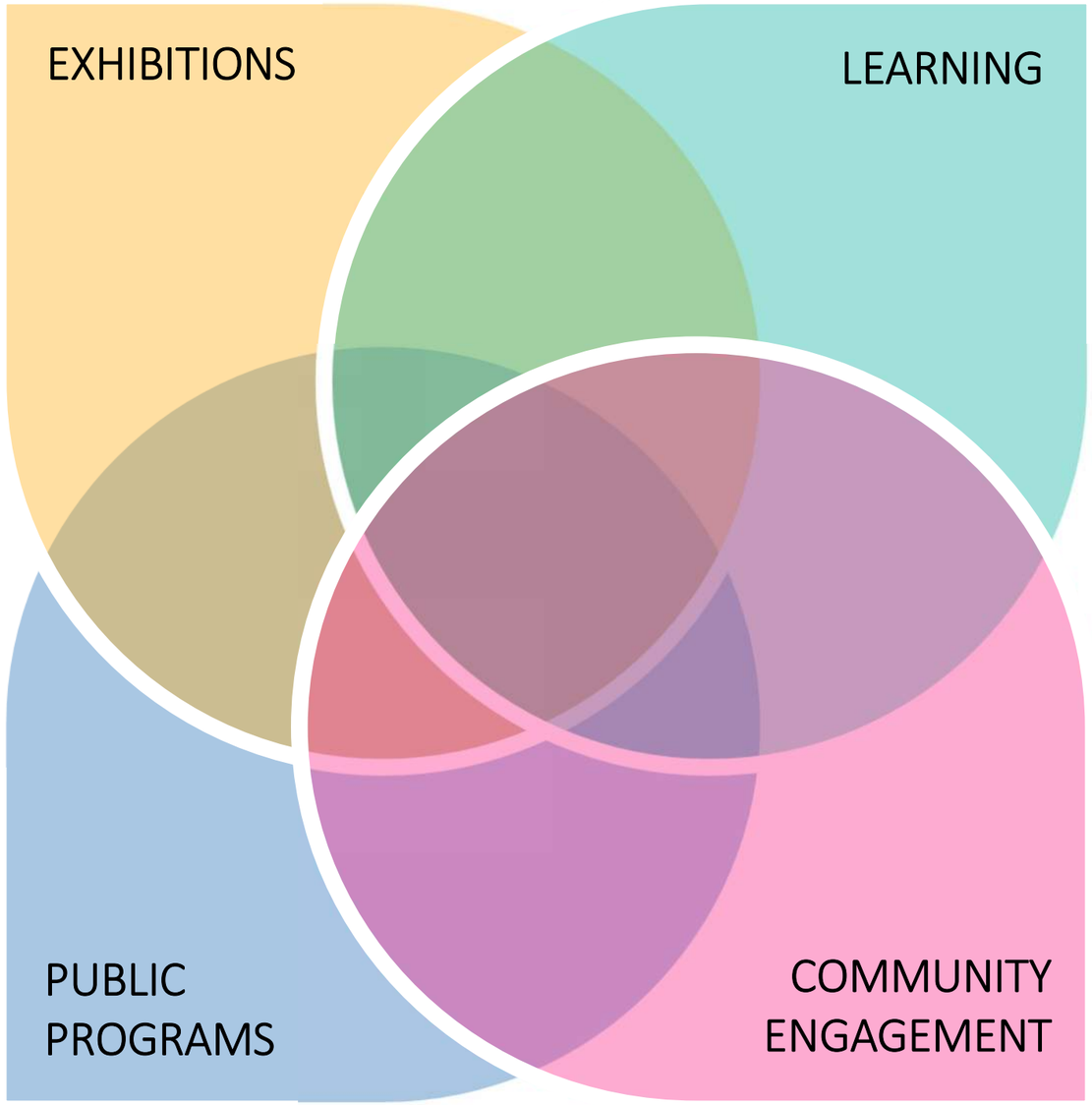
“Every lowrider builder is an engineer knowledgeable in hydraulics, mechanics, fluids, materials, fabrication, and so much more. A comprehensive museum should recognize the skills that it takes to make them roll in style. One has to be a DIY master to resurrect an old vehicle into lowrider status.” —Local community member

“Dig into what is that core of building something physical, that is also building community at the same time, and building healing, and building coming together.” —Regional curator

Character of the Spaces and Programming

- Informed/and mutually energized by Española and the region as a place of community celebration
- Welcoming for all people, all ages
- Reflecting and responding to the culture and natural landscape of Northern New Mexico
- Connecting outdoor lowrider life and events with indoor experiences
- Multidisciplinary
- Supporting active creation
- Compelling destination, embracing immersive and experiential elements
- Conducive to gathering and socializing
- Savoring the journey: Provides time/space for thoughtful content, elevating details and relations, and deepen human connection
- Bilingual (English, New Mexican Spanish)

Visitor Experience Framework



Visitor Experience Framework

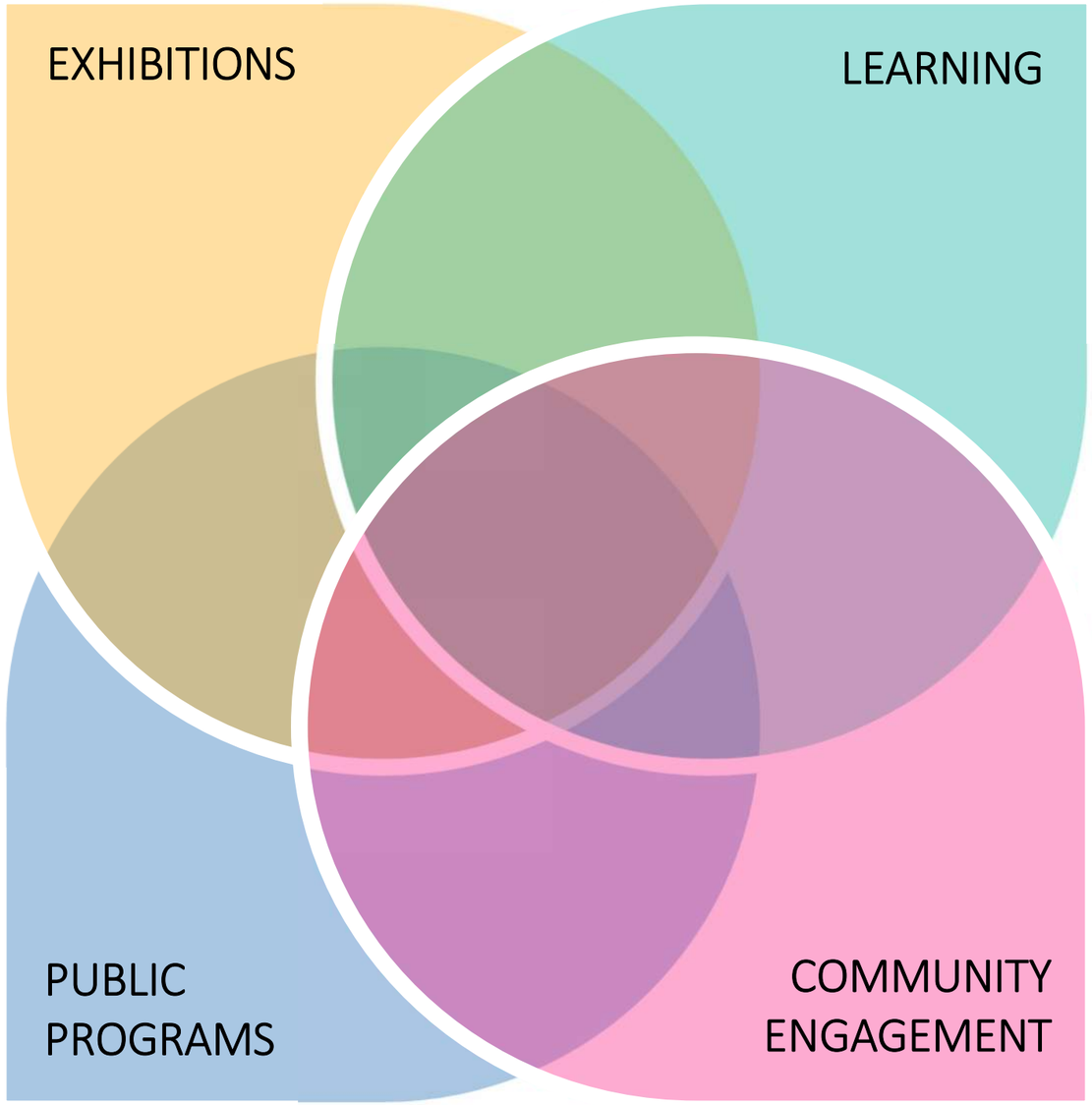
Local lowrider history and culture

Survey exhibitions

Special focus exhibitions

Signature displays

Digital content



School programs

Active making/workshop spaces

Workforce development program

Intergenerational workshops

Classes, demonstrations

Tours

Talks and lectures

Film Program

Indoor & outdoor performing arts

Signature events

Digital programming

Show and Shine event destination and meeting point for cruises

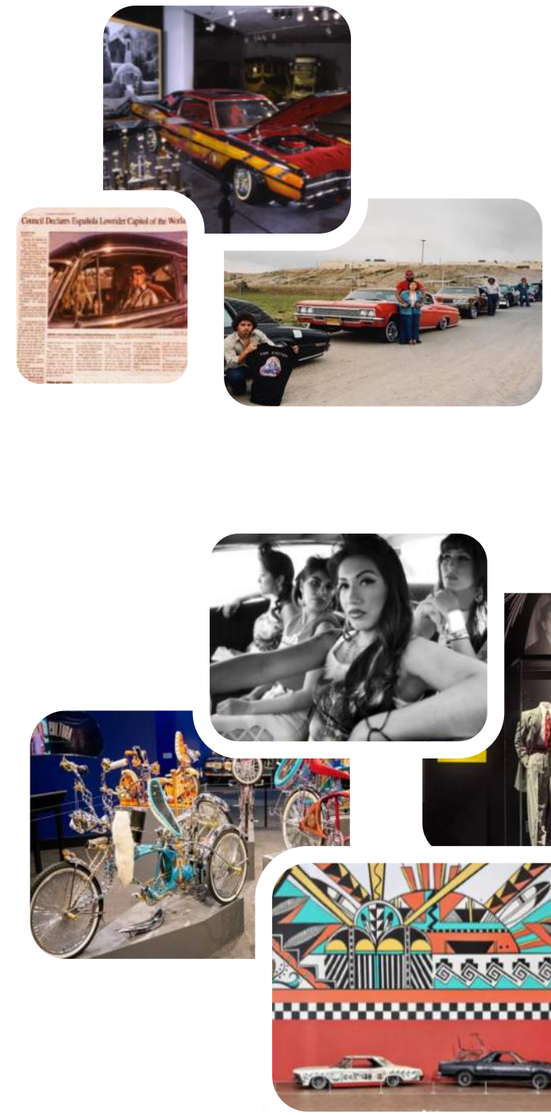
Family Programs

Youth contests/prizes

Community events and spaces for informal community gatherings

Programmatic spaces for vendors

Visitor Experience Framework: Exhibitions



EXHIBITIONS

Local history: permanent displays and section rotations about Española lowrider history and culture

Survey exhibitions: Broad themes with a regional or national scope may include visiting traveling exhibitions.

Special focus exhibitions: Deep dives into creative disciplines, technical accomplishments, specific stories, unique cultural threads, and historical connections. Incl. collaboration with regional partners and traveling exhibitions.

Signature displays: e.g., permanent and rotating murals, club plaque walls, featured artworks, and spotlight displays (e.g., car of the month), immersive and interactive features.

Digital content: to complement and augment content access onsite and increase access and engagement online.











Visitor Experience Framework: Exhibitions (contd.)

Exhibitions at the Lowrider Museum will bridge past and present, embracing contemporary approaches to generate participation and dialogue, to engage both local communities and visitors.

Exhibitions at the Lowrider Museum have the potential to feature rich multidisciplinary content:

- Lowrider cars (all types) and other vehicles, including bikes.
- Historical materials: objects and documents, e.g., key proclamations and legislative bills, posters and printed announcements, oral history, documentary photography, and video.
- A full range of artistic creation: traditional crafts, design, visual arts (incl. paintings, murals, sculptures, installations, fashion, performance, music, literature, poetry).
- Immersive and interactive components e.g., garage recreations, interactive elements (experiencing hydraulics)
- Hands-on activations for all ages with dedicated areas for youth
- Digital content that expands interpretive opportunities on site to activate participation, and digital content online, e.g., visual/audio stories, website features, and video podcasts.

Exhibitions will delve into a myriad of topics, including (but not limited to):

- Internal migration during WWII
- Generations (50s - 60s, 70s - 80s - 90s -)
- Mid-20th C. Chicana/o Pachuco/a History, e.g., Zoot suit culture, Chicana/o movement, cruising bans,
- American car culture, Route 66
- Native American participation in lowrider culture
- Changing role of women in Lowriders
- Lowrider inspired art
- Good Friday in Española
- 1980s Lowrider shows in Española
- Ingenuity and technical achievements: car transformations, historical restorations, hydraulics, electric conversions, etc.
- Featured storied vehicles in full context
- Lowrider culture in other regions/countries
- Religious iconography
- Paños and incarceration

Visitor Experience Framework: Learning













LEARNING

School programs: K-12 on-site school visits and curriculum-informed programs in schools

Active making/workshop spaces: Active creation is a priority for the museum; workshop spaces will welcome local creators to work on specific projects and collaborate/share them with the public

Workforce development program: Middle-High School early career exposure, mentorship, and skill building

Intergenerational Workshops: Team learning/building and knowledge sharing

Classes and Demonstrations: Targeted hands-on classes and demonstrations with featured creators.

Tours: General Museum tours, and special custom tours with featured community guides









Visitor Experience Framework: Learning (Contd.)

All learning offerings will introduce cultural history and tradition components in connection with exhibitions and community engagement

Active building/creation in **workshop spaces** will welcome local creators to work on specific projects, collaborate, and/or share their process with the public.

More traditional **school programs** will offer museum visits for K-12 schools and engage the school system by providing curriculum-informed activities and digital media in collaboration with school educators.

Intergenerational workshops will bring together community experts and foster creative collaboration and skill-sharing between younger learners and their parents/grandparents.

The Lowrider museums could offer a **rotating selection of classes** focused on practical skills and techniques for different skill levels, **as well as demonstrations featuring lowriders or creators** sharing aspects of their process and techniques.

In collaboration with middle and high schools and higher education partner(s), the museum could provide opportunities for early exposure to career paths and mentorship, as well as skill training in lowrider-related trades and crafts.

Workforce development programs have the potential be a major differentiator for the Lowrider Museum in the region, with offerings that will delve deeper into a wide variety of disciplines and creative skills:

- Automotive
- Electrical and systems
- Suspension and hydraulics
- Painting Techniques (pinstriping, airbrushing, custom paint techniques)
- Upholstery and interior crafts
- Bikes customization
- Toy/remote-controlled lowriders
- Arts and crafts
- Entrepreneurship

Visitor Experience Framework: Community Engagement













COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Show and Shines destination and **meeting point for cruises**

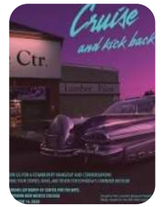
Family Programs, including regular weekly offerings, seasonal celebrations, and special family festival days, including little show and shines

Youth contests/prizes will nurture talent and ingenuity while promoting skills development and lowrider traditions.

Community events and gatherings, events organized by the community and with/for the community, including spaces for clubs/groups; and social spaces for informal community conversations.

Programmatic spaces for vendors: space for food trucks and craft vendors during outdoor events and local vendor pop-ups at the museum.

Preserving community stories: oral/video story booths















Visitor Experience Framework: Community Engagement

Integrated with the community, the museum can support Española and the larger lowrider community in New Mexico by becoming a hub where communities can gather, share stories, socialize, find information on resources, and celebrate.

Thoughtfully planned community engagement will allow for different activities that appeal across generations and/or specific groups, and consider practical amenities

The museum can collaborate with existing clubs and associations to host informal social gatherings/car display opportunities such as Show and Shine events, serve as a welcoming meeting point for cruises, and coordinate supporting services and amenities as needed.

Family Programs at the museum will nurture intergenerational exchange, highlight traditions, and use storytelling to feature live interaction with creators and performers, and offer rich hands-on activities.

Youth contests/prizes will nurture skill development while encouraging ingenuity, creativity, and community pride

Community events and gatherings: the museum will foster close relationships with mission-aligned community groups and make spaces available for their gatherings. Social spaces inside and outside the museum will foster conversation and connection.

The museum can be a place where community partners can share information about relevant resources (e.g., social services and other training programs).

Programmatic spaces for vendors: Local food and craft vendors will greatly complement the visitor experience during outdoor special events. The museum will also support entrepreneurship in Española by featuring local creators in rotating pop-ups at the museum shop.

Community engagement programs, in general, will also serve as opportunities for the museum to gather community stories by providing oral history or video booths where community members can share memories to be preserved and inspire future programming.

Visitor Experience Framework: Public Programs







PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Indoor & outdoor performing arts: Featuring live music, poetry, and dance.

Talks: Curators, historians, local and national experts, artists, and lowriding figures, in connection with exhibitions and other programming components.

Film program: Movies and short- and long-form documentaries that feature lowrider and car culture history, community, and related art forms.

Annual signature event that shines a spotlight on the accomplishments and future promise of lowrider creators and cultural production.

Digital programming: Programs streaming,

and a weekly or monthly podcast.



















Visitor Experience Framework: Public Programs (Contd.)

Public programs will often respond to opportunities from other programming areas. For instance, performing arts can complement cruises and outdoor community events. Talks and lectures might deepen regular visitors' understanding of exhibition topics while creating dialogue with local community members. Digital programming could include special classes or media content shared on the website and social media. A podcast series might explore current exhibitions through oral histories and interviews with community members and other experts.

As the museum grows, it could develop an annual signature event with a clear focus to build on over time. One possibility is an awards ceremony organized with partners—perhaps an award connected to Good Friday, Lowrider Magazine's Hall of Fame, or regional shows. Another option might be a symposium bringing together artists and designers that produces an annual publication.

When evaluating these opportunities, it's important to investigate how the museum can support or collaborate with existing annual events organized by the local community rather than compete with them.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Partnerships and Collaboration

All Lowrider Museum programming will be highly collaborative to strengthen content and participation.

Collaboration could mean sustained partnerships, seasonal programming, or even one-off events. The typologies and partner spectrum will be further refined as the museum develops. It is likely that work with partners will touch on multiple programming aspects.

Partnership goals

- Research and development for exhibition content
- Program development and reach

Potential partner types

- Lowrider clubs (New Mexico, National, International)
- Lowrider associations
- Community organizations and associations
- Civic organizations (local, state)
- Cultural organizations (local, regional, national)
- Private organization that organize and promote lowrider events
- Educational organizations (local, regional/national as appropriate based on content connections)

A preliminary list of potential partners has been started and will continue being developed in future development stages.

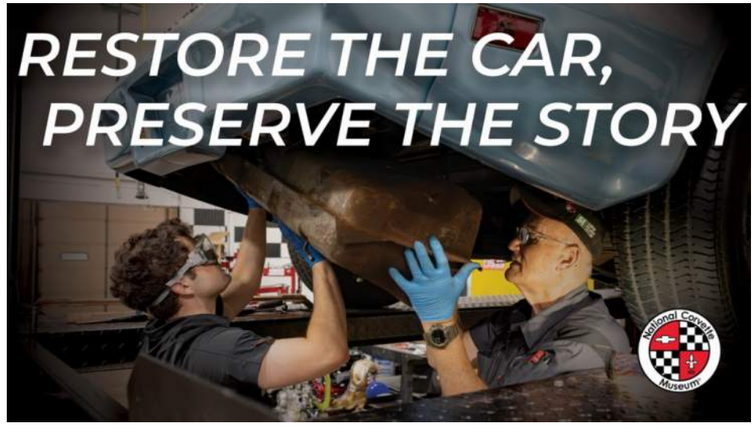
CONSIDERING A COLLECTION

Building and Stewarding a Collection

Determining whether the Lowrider Museum should be a collecting institution is a complex issue with significant space and budget implications.

At this early planning stage, there is not enough information to make a firm recommendation. To aid understanding of the type of decision-making needed in the next phases, the following pages provide a comparative reference framework on the advantages, challenges, and implications of collecting vs. not collecting. The last pages of this section include a reference list of activities and space considerations for stewarding a collection, as well as a list of questions to prompt discussion during later decision-making.











Building and Stewarding a Collection

	COLLECTING	NOT COLLECTING
ADVANTAGES	– Flexibility to shape exhibitions based on owned collections – Deeper historical knowledge and the ability to contextualize the lowrider movement – Strengthens museum identity and learning programs – Potential to secure the future preservation of northern New Mexico's cultural heritage – Building a collection enhances access to institutional partnerships and fundraising opportunities	– Deeper focus on contemporary creators, learning programs, and community engagement – Nimble and able to innovate more easily – Greater adaptability and workflow flexibility – More responsive to evolving community needs
CHALLENGES	– Higher demands for storage space and collection care – Additional collection study and care work required	– Less storage and object care space required, but not eliminated – Additional work is required to secure loans for exhibitions – Challenges accessing key objects that are in high demand, missed opportunities
IMPLICATIONS	– Larger staff is required for collection management – Bigger building footprint and potentially less spatial flexibility – Ongoing collection care and storage costs	– Smaller staff focused on programming rather than collections – More open and flexible spaces are possible – Ongoing borrowing and commissioning costs for exhibitions

Stewarding a Collection: Space Needs and Activities Have a Profound Impact on Operating Budget

Space

- There is a moderate-to-weak correlation between collection scale and storage square footage, due to variability in the scale and storage requirements of various collection items.
- Space for display, storage, and other back-of-house needs, contingent collection types (vehicles will require larger spaces)

Policies and Plans

- Policy: Core document. Establishes institutional framework scope, uses, care, and management, and ethical and legal considerations
- Development Plan: Establishes a strategy for 5 – 10-year periods, with priorities/targets for collection growth

Curatorial

- Acquisition and deaccessioning
- Research
- Plans, policies, and procedures
- Field public inquiries
- Exhibitions and interpretation
- Public programs
- Publications

Documentation

- Entry of identification, source and history
- Numbering of object and record
- Acknowledging the source of acquisition
- Formal transfer of title by gift agreement/receipt
- Insurance coverage
- Initial condition report
- Initial location record for the object
- Location tracking method
- Exit documentation (in the event of loans)

Information Management

- Intellectual property
- Access and public use of information/images
- Commitment to accurate documentation
- Systems management/integration
- Hardware, software, equipment
- Training, development

Conservation

- Preventative conservation
- Investigation and treatment, restoration
- Conservation research

Stewarding a Collection: Key Questions for Future Decision-Making

Key Questions for primary stakeholders to consider when deciding whether to pursue a Collection for the Lowrider Museum:

1. Should the museum be a collecting institution?
2. What priority should collection development receive relative to other programming investments (such as exhibitions, learning programs, or community engagement)?
3. If the museum were to collect:
    a. What types of collections should the museum collect?
    b. Should the museum aim to be comprehensive, or focus on more specific geographic and historical period parameters? If so, which ones would make the most sense to pursue?
    c. What knowledge and perspectives should the collection impart to visitors?
    d. What could be the impact of collecting on the lowrider community?
    e. What are the budget implications of operating under selected parameters?

Potential collection types to consider

- Vehicles
- Art and design (different media and formats, incl. paintings, sculpture, installations, works on paper, photography, etc.)
- Textiles
- Archives/personal papers/ephemera
- Oral history (and video memories)
- Metalworking, parts, and samples
- Photography

TARGET AUDIENCES

Target Audiences

	CULTURE SEEKERS	FAMILIES & COMMUNITY	LEARNERS & CREATORS
What are they drawn to?	Core audience members are active and engaged in Lowrider culture and history, broader car culture, and/or New Mexican culture and Chicana/o history; culture seekers are interested in art, craft, design, and/or pop culture; travelers interested in cultural heritage are drawn to place-based experiences.	Events and content that strengthen community bonds, offer space for socializing and celebrating community, and cultivate the younger generations.	School educators are seeking offerings that augment curriculum and advance Common Core Standards. Learners are seeking stimulating experiences, skill development, and practical experience. Creators are invested in building/making/creating and skill-sharing.
What are they likely to do?	Repeat visitors and potential members are deeply invested in lowriders and car culture. They have the potential to participate in the broadest range of offerings (exhibitions, public programs, learning opportunities, and community engagement). Regional/national/international audiences will visit the exhibitions and participate in signature events.	These visitors will participate in community group gatherings and will actively use the museum as a meeting point and social destination. Families will attend festivals and events with offerings for all ages, including those for the youngest.	- K-5 will participate in school visits - 6-12 students and young adults will participate in skill development, mentorships, internships, and workshops. - Adult creators and learners will use workshop spaces in classes and demonstrations. - Friends and families will participate in intergenerational experiences.
Who are they?	- Lowrider community members (incl. car club members) - National lowrider history + culture seekers - Broader car culture aficionados - Students, including higher education - Creative workers - Domestic/international tourists	- Car clubs - Community groups + partner organizations - Youth clubs - Families (all generations)	- School students grades 6-12 - Postsecondary learners - Lifelong learners - Educators - Custom painters, mechanics/builders, upholsterers + all types of creative workers - Parents/grandparents/caregivers
Size & Geography	Regional + national and international travelers	Northern New Mexico (and generally within a 60-min driving radius) with the ability to draw from Albuquerque and beyond for special events.	Española and broader locale (generally within a 30-min driving radius) with the ability to draw from Albuquerque and beyond for special classes and demonstrations.

MUSEUM GOVERNANCE

Museum Governance Structure

Clarifying Governance Leadership

Currently, there is no clear consensus on who will own and/or govern a new Museum. These are complex issues that require further examination and planning.

While the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs oversaw this study and is identified by some stakeholders as a potential owner and/or operator, its mandated role to date is facilitative rather than directive.

The state operates within a structured statutory framework that limits its independent authority to establish new museums. Absent legislative action and appropriations to create and operate a state-run museum, a nonprofit entity would be required to lead the Museum's development and ongoing operations. This entity would be responsible for governance, financial oversight, and ensuring alignment with the Museum's community-centered mission. One of two ownership/governance models is likely: Private Non-Profit or Public-Private Partnership; these are described on the following page.



Photo by Jessica Roybal

Museum Governance Structure: Two Models

Private Non-Profit Model

Many museums operate as 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporations governed by independent boards of trustees.

Interviews revealed that a Lowrider Museum board was formed and that it established a 501 (c)(3) and trademarked the name “Española Lowrider Museum”. A separate “Lowrider Museum Coalition” effort has also been reported, though the activities and status of incorporation are unclear.

The future roles and relationship between these entities in this project should be explored and defined as planning continues; However, it is recommended that a new non-profit entity be established for the Museum, providing for a fresh start with an updated set of goals and partners.

Public-Private Partnership Model

Given the unique mission and community context, and the potential for state partnership, the Museum could benefit from a public-private partnership structure.

A governance model that New Mexico has successfully employed involves becoming part of the Department of Cultural Affairs, with core policies and operations managed and resourced by the State and oversight provided by governor-appointed boards. In this structure, the State maintains responsibility for collections, facilities, education, and programming while a private museum nonprofit entity supports fundraising, exhibitions, and community engagement.

This partnership approach requires careful evaluation of legal frameworks and feasibility under New Mexico state law. The viability of such arrangements should be thoroughly assessed by all parties before finalizing the governance structure..

Museum Governance Structure

Community engagement must be a governing value, not a programmatic add-on. The establishment of an advisory group will be crucial to strengthening roots, ensuring trust amongst constituents and audiences, and securing cooperation from local municipalities. This group could be developed both regionally and nationally; however, strong local community representation would yield better insights and input and would champion the organization's work by serving its primary and most direct audiences.

Quarterly convenings and mechanisms for gathering community input on a regular basis will set the tempo for the group’s work. The outcomes will inform and refine the organization's activities to ensure reach and representation.

An Advisory Board could include:

- Local community leaders and funders
- Car club leaders
- Governmental representatives
- Representatives from local businesses and organizations
- Residents
- Educators and teachers
- Parents
- Creatives
- Historians and scholars

PRELIMINARY ATTENDANCE AND BUDGET RANGES

Preliminary Range for Attendance and Annual Operating Budget

While it is too early in the planning process to project precise attendance and annual operating expenses, it is possible to infer order-of-magnitude ranges based on national, regional, and local comparable experiences.

The ranges below give a sense of the Lowrider Museum's anticipated scale, drawing from data gathered on car museums and local institutions, including operating budgets and participation data points, as well as the concept outlined in the previous pages.

Based on the participation data captured during the research phase, **the Lowrider Museum has the potential to attract between 40,000 and 60,000 visits per year**. This assumes ample investment in programming, community engagement, and marketing/communications with regional reach that build a national profile and reputation.

At this preliminary stage, **a reasonable assumption would be an annual operating budget of between $2M - $3M** to achieve the vision, which would allow for robust programming and community engagement. This level of funding could potentially sustain a focused collection; however, this would need to be studied further, particularly if the core of the collection is expected to be vehicles. **It should be assumed that 50-60% of the annual budget would be spent on staff, indicating 18 - 25 permanent full-time equivalent positions (FTEs).** The museum will likely hire a mix of full-time, part-time, and contractor positions, amounting to a higher headcount.

NEXT STEPS

Bridging to the Future

Recommended next steps will advance “concept” to “plan” with concrete program, staff, operating, and business plans.

The following actions are recommended over the next 1-2 years to ensure the organization is established and begins to develop.

1. Establish a Governance Model and Identify Primary Stakeholders (Board, Staff, Partners)
2. Establish Operating Priorities and Launch Pilot Programming
3. Build Networks to Support the Lowrider Museum
4. Build Long-Term Alliances

1. Establish a Governance Model and Identify Primary Stakeholders

There is no clear consensus on who precisely will own/govern the Lowrider Museum. Further study is recommended to select the most appropriate model. Once defined, a non-profit entity will be formed and prepared to steward its founding and growth.

Immediate next steps:

- Study ownership/governance options. Plan and set up the most appropriate model.
- Create a working group to meet regularly (weekly or bi-weekly) and advance institutional development
- Confirm Board members, develop a Board cultivation plan, and establish community advisory group constituents
- Identify/establish a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity with bylaws and Board giving guidelines
- Develop an operating budget (to hire initial staff and launch pilot programming)
- Identify partnership opportunities for collaborative programming
- Engage stakeholders and core constituencies in meaningful dialogue about fundraising, programming, collaboration, and shared resources

2. Establish Operating Priorities and Launch Pilot Programming

Once the Board and initial staff are in place, conduct a focused strategic planning exercise to align priorities and direct resources optimally.

Pilot programs offer an immediate way to establish organizational identity, build relationships with audiences and donors, and test programming concepts, partnerships, and potential venues. Even with limited staff (1-3 people), early programming activities can gauge community interest and engagement.

The Lowrider Museum's greatest early opportunity lies in establishing partnerships to enable pilot programs. While these relationships take time to develop, they're essential for launching meaningful initiatives with a small team.

Pilot programs should bring the Museum's vision into action and build community support. By stewarding connections, establishing a programming voice, and pursuing funding opportunities, the organization will build its reputation, clarify its identity, and develop a content pipeline.

Most pilot programming will succeed through collaborations and partnerships. These relationships position the Museum within the region's cultural landscape and connect leadership directly with audiences and supporters.

3. Build Networks to Support the Lowrider Museum

Realizing this ambitious project requires cultivating diverse stakeholders, including major donors, community leaders, board members, government officials, civic leaders, heads of cultural and educational organizations, collectors, historians, and creators. This cultivation work demands dedicated staff, formal systems, and expertise in communications and fundraising. Activities range from directing contributions to annual funds, major gifts, and capital campaigns to encouraging program attendance.

Building relationships with creators, creative workers, curators, and instructors requires a distinct approach. The initial operating period offers an opportunity to live the mission by stewarding experimental collaborations and exchanges. Establishing trust early on through substantive dialogue and collaborative possibilities with lowriders, artists, and other creators will demonstrate the institution's value.

"This museum would need to have and advisory group, to have the experts in, who've been lowriders for their entire life. You need that group to really give you feedback to stay in the right path."
—Regional museum leader

Advisory Structures

An Advisory Group would strengthen community roots and ensure constituent trust. Community representation provides better insights and champions the organization's work with primary audiences. Quarterly meetings would inform and refine organizational activities.

Potential Advisory Group composition:

- Community leaders
- Car club leaders
- Political and governmental representatives
- Local business and organization representatives
- Residents, including parents
- Educators and teachers
- Lowrider creatives and artists
- Cultural historians, curators, museum leaders, and other experts

Additionally, a National Visiting Committee of peer cultural leaders could convene annually to source exhibition content, develop programs, and provide mentorship and professional development.

4. Build Long-Term Alliances

As momentum and excitement for the Museum build, additional collaboration opportunities are expected to emerge.

Longer-term partnerships may take many forms, from select programs to more structured strategic alliances. Partners and collaborators could include other cultural organizations, such as museums, galleries, and workshop spaces with existing suitable equipment, as well as regional colleges, libraries, regional schools, and other institutions.

Mutual benefits could range from sharing space to minimize costs to expanding capacity by equitably sharing resources and materials.

III.
POTENTIAL LOCATIONS ANALYSIS

Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

OVERVIEW

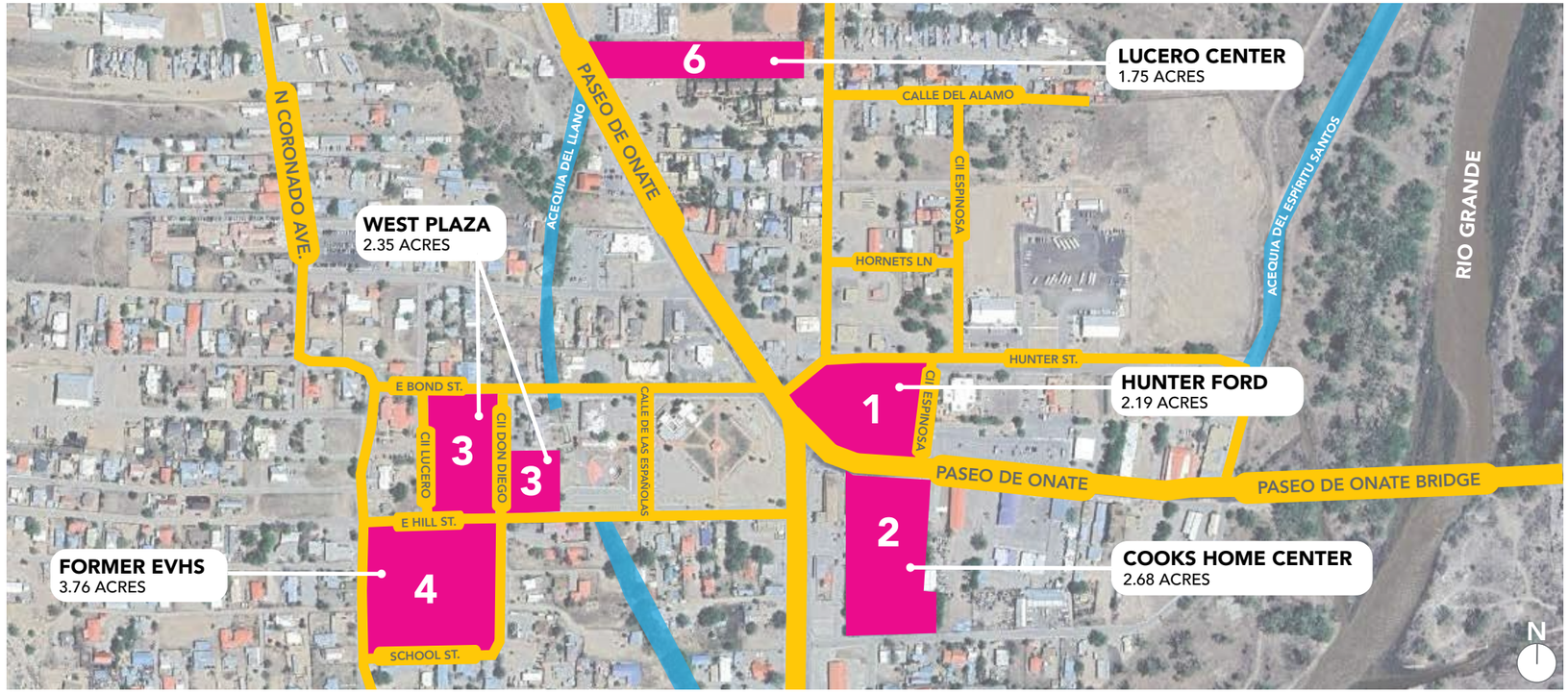
WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SITES

Potential sites for the future Lowrider Museum were identified through site analysis, stakeholder tours, meetings with Española city leaders, and community feedback. Our team toured these sites alongside key project stakeholders including Española Pro Tem Mayor/City Council member Peggy Sue Martinez, New Mexico State Representative Susan Herrera, and Jessie Greenspan of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs.

The six sites identified for consideration are the Hunter Ford Dealership, the vacant lot just west of the Bond House Museum/ Española Plaza & Convento, the Cooks Home Center, the former Española Valley High School (EVHS), the vacant lot adjacent to Walmart, and the vacant lot near the Richard Lucero Center.

KEY CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A SITE:

1. **Site Development Cost** (Size, Land Ownership, Existing Site Conditions)
2. **Parking** (Visitor & Event Space)
3. **Proximity to Cultural Center** (Plaza de Española)
4. **Proximity to Other Cultural Institutions**
5. **Can locals get here easily?**
6. **Potential/Availability for Local Contributing Businesses** (Gift Shop, Café, Local Artist Shop, B&B)
7. **Adjacent Reuse of Existing Infrastructure**
8. **Current Infrastructure** (Sidewalks, Vegetation, Shade, Existing Buildings)



Española Historic District Sites



North Riverside Site

SITE 1 - HUNTER FORD

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located at the intersection of Paseo De Oñate and Los Alamos Highway, the Hunter Ford site sits on a former car dealership and totals approximately 2.19 acres.



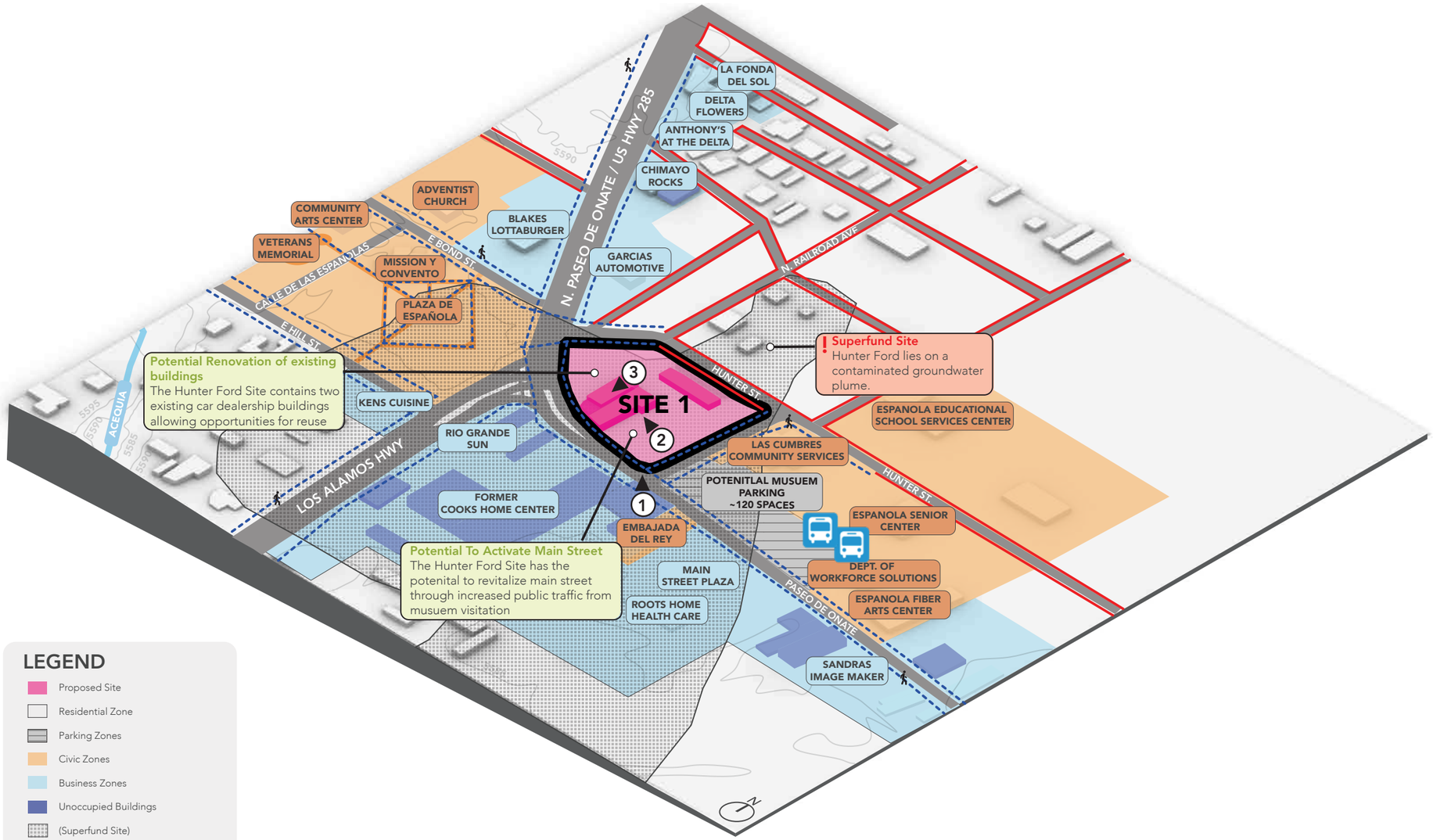
SE Corner of Site



Closeup of Dealership Building



Former Dealership Interior Conditions



LEGEND

- Proposed Site
- Residential Zone
- Parking Zones
- Civic Zones
- Business Zones
- Unoccupied Buildings
- (Superfund Site)
- Pedestrian Access/Paths
- No Pedestrian Access/Paths

SITE 2 - COOKS HOME CENTER

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located along main street Paseo De Onate, the Cooks Home Center site sits on a recently closed home improvement store and totals approximately 2.68 acres.



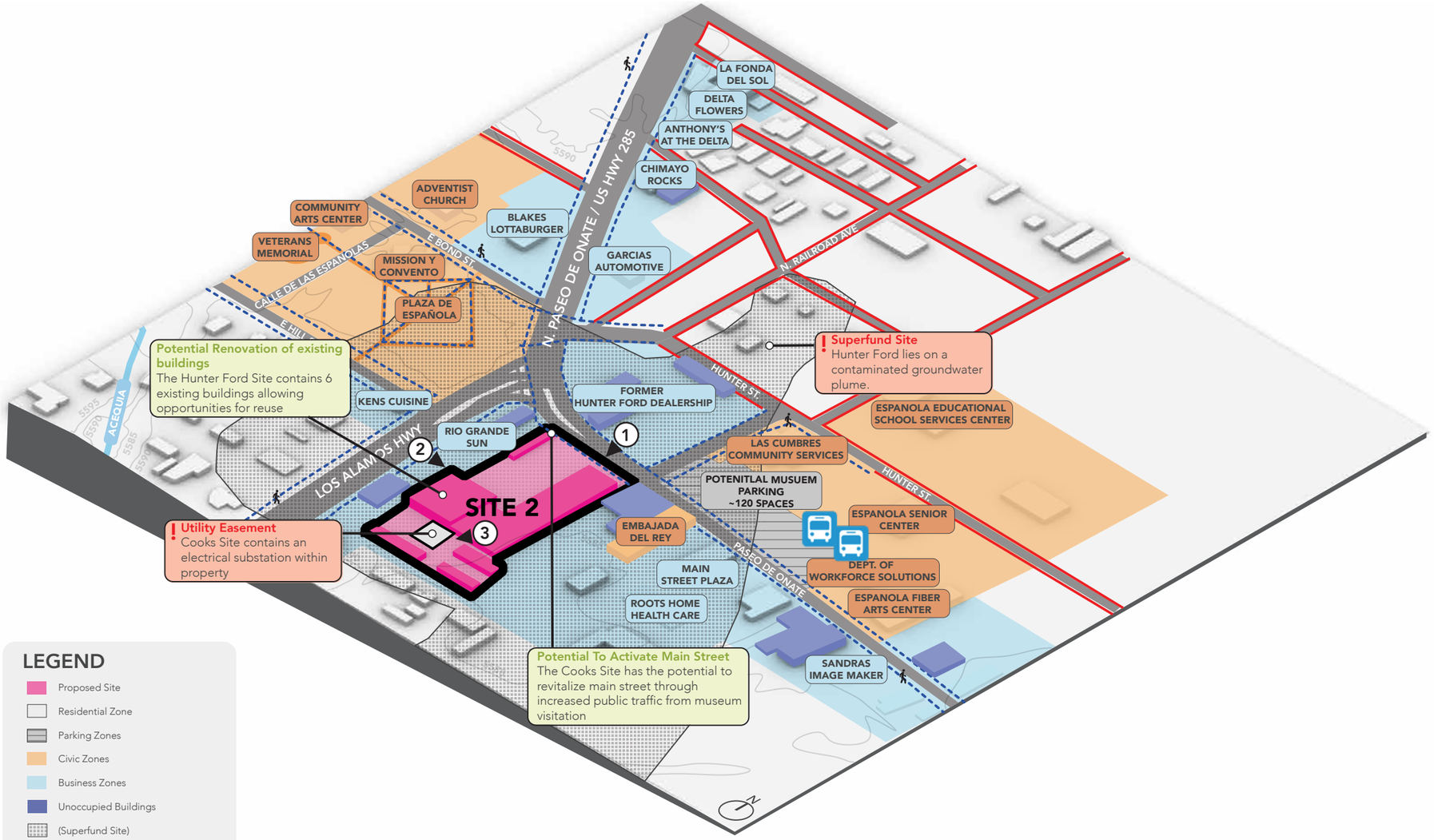
North end of Site



West End of Site



Utility Easement



LEGEND

- Proposed Site
- Residential Zone
- Parking Zones
- Civic Zones
- Business Zones
- Unoccupied Buildings
- (Superfund Site)
- Pedestrian Access/Paths
- No Pedestrian Access/Paths

SITE 3 - WEST PLAZA

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located west of Española Plaza, the west plaza site contains two vacant dirt lots, totaling approximately 1.85 and 0.5 acres with a combined total of approximately 2.35 acres.



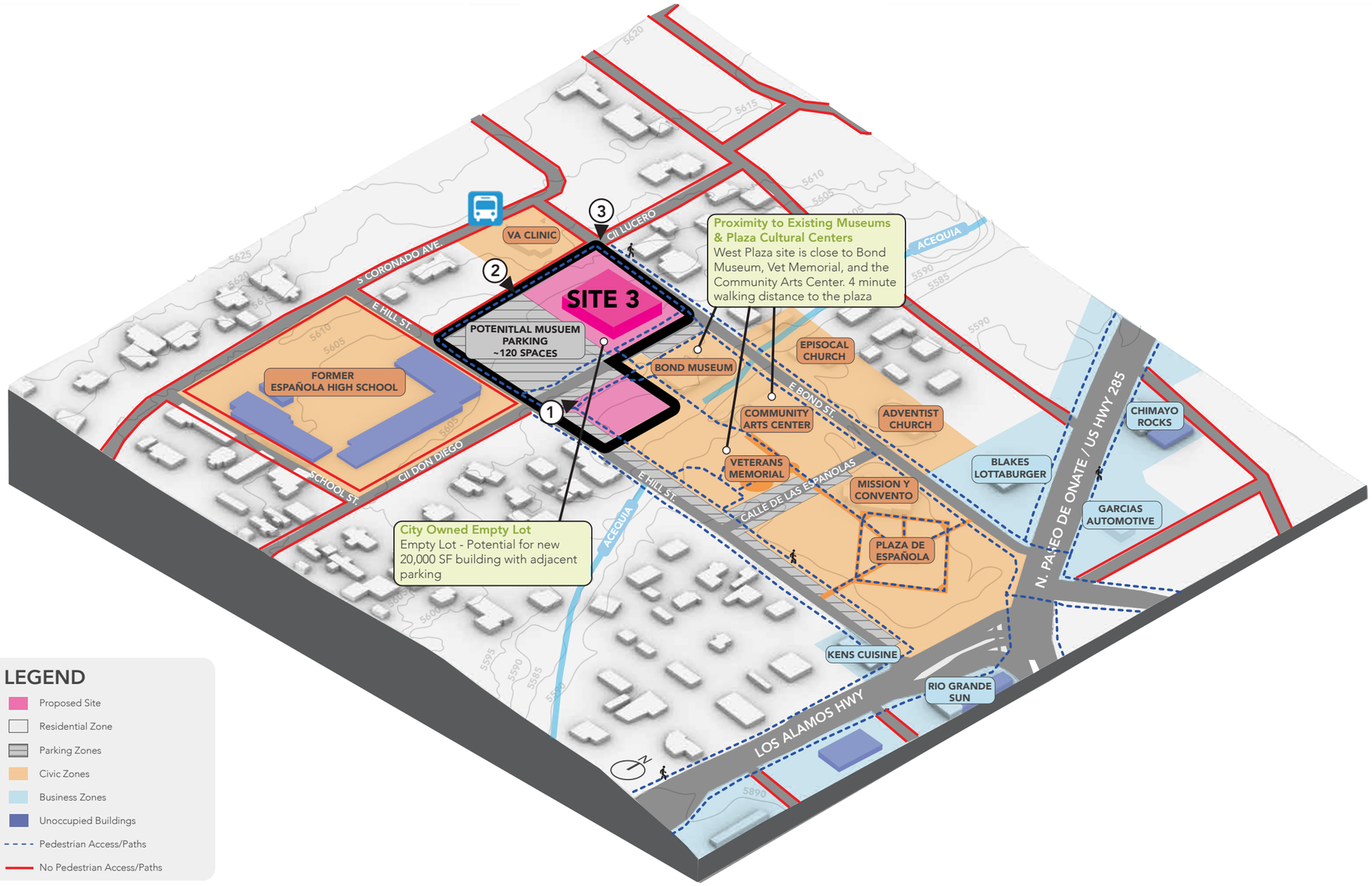
SW Corner of East Lot



West end of West Lot



NW Corner of West Lot



SITE 4 - FORMER ESPAÑOLA VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located SW of Española Plaza, the site sits on the location of a former high school and totals approximately 3.76 acres.



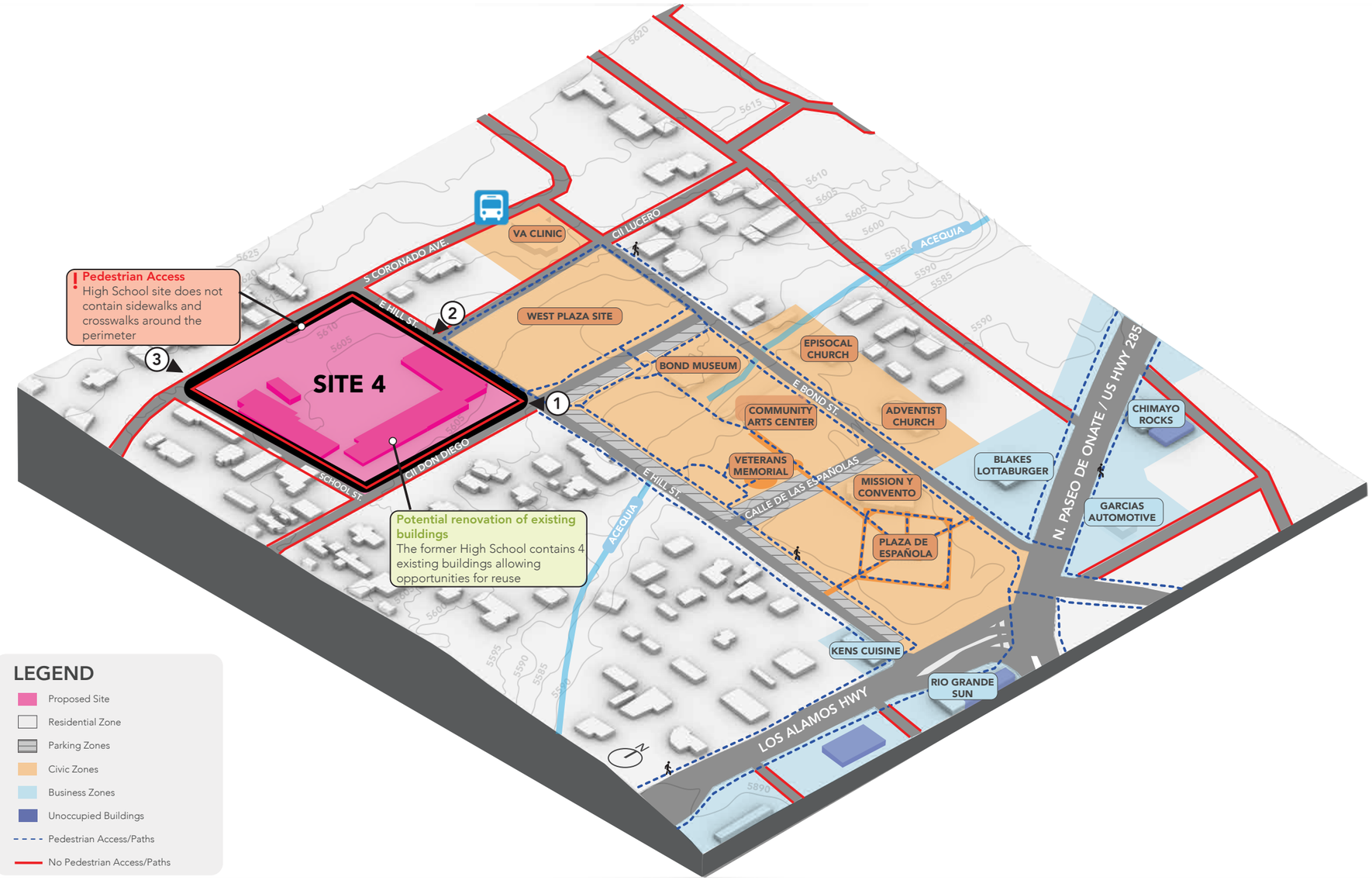
NE Corner of Site



North End of Site



SW Corner of Site



SITE 5 - NORTH RIVERSIDE

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located along the North Riverside Drive commercial district, the site sits on vacant farmland and contains a central residential property. The site has a total acreage of 16.84.



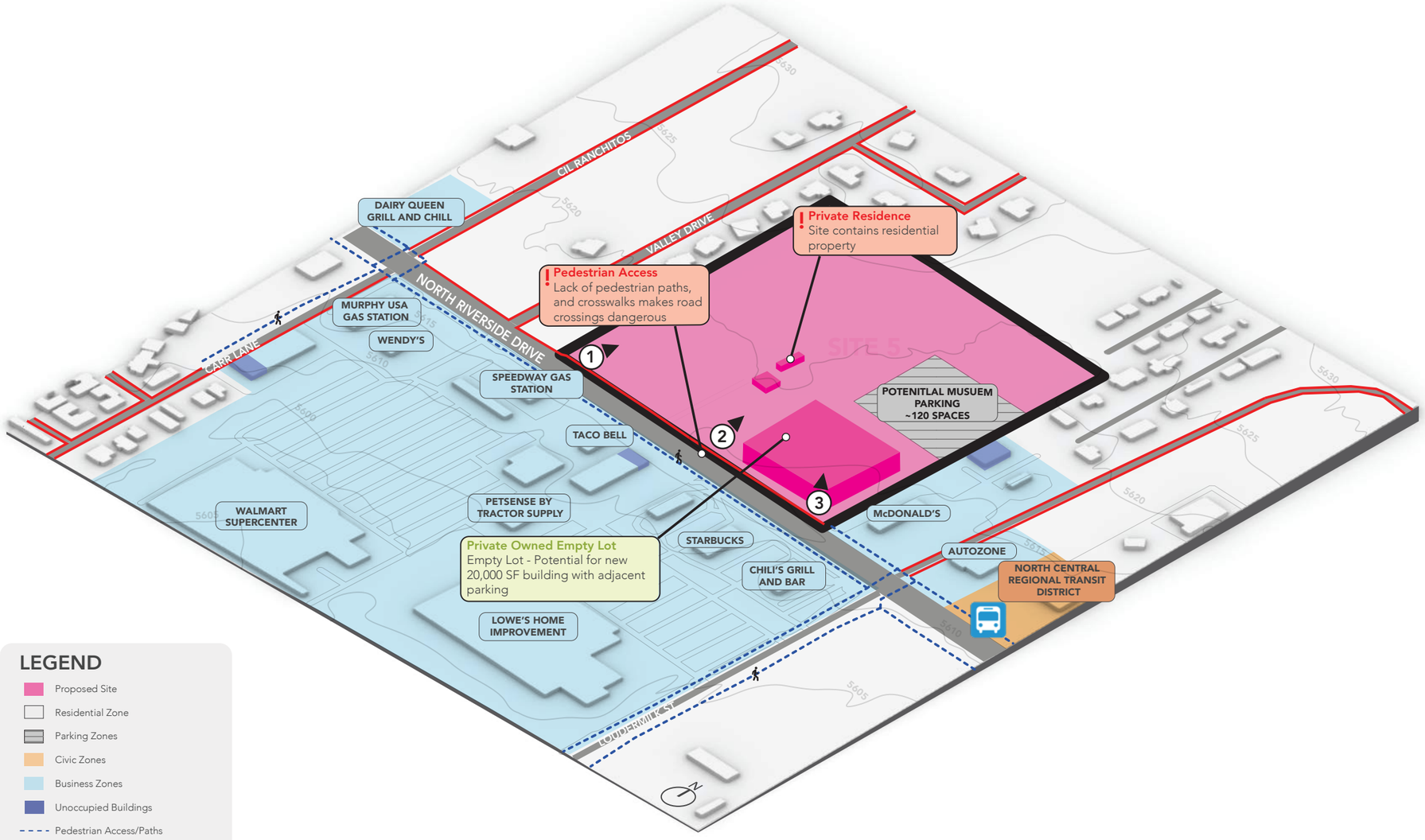
Northern End of Site



Central Residence



Southern End of Site



SITE 6 - LUCERO CENTER

SITE DESCRIPTION

Located adjacent to the Lucero Center along Paseo De Onate the site sits on a narrow vacant dirt lot. The site has a total acreage of 1.75.



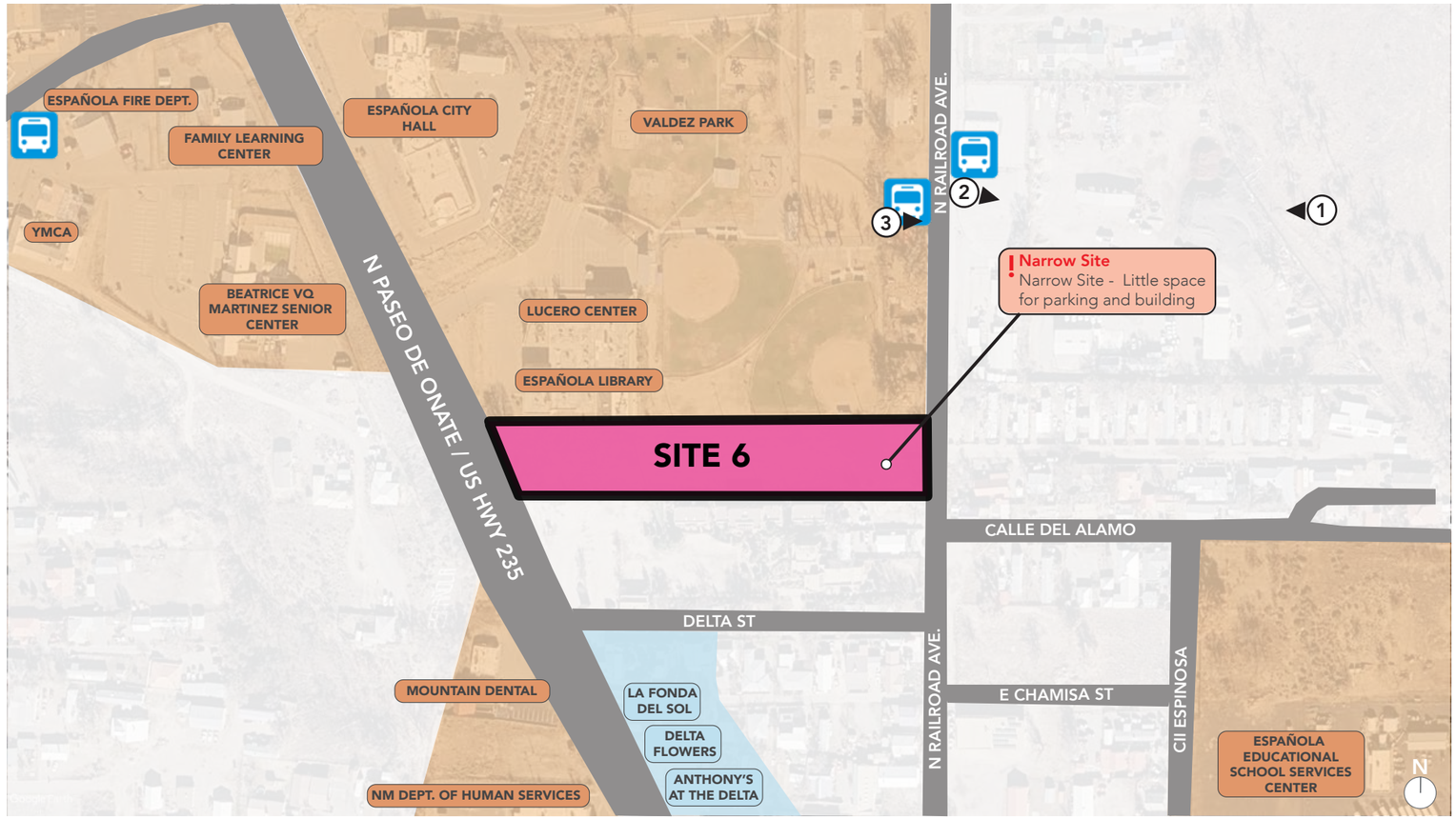
Eastern End of Site



Middle of Site



Western End of Site



LEGEND

- Buisness Zone
- Proposed Site
- Residential Zone
- Civic Zones

SITE ANALYSIS CRITERIA MATRIX

We have developed the following matrix to provide the Department of Cultural Affairs with a data-driven approach to site selection. This matrix quantifies our evaluations of all sites identified across eight key criteria to help identify based on overall suitability in order to identify both the strengths and limitations of each potential site respective to site development cost, parking capacity, proximity to cultural centers and other institutions, business potential, opportunities for adjacent infrastructure reuse, and the condition of existing infrastructure.

Each site's qualitative performance is identified by the following rating system: **Good (Score-3), Moderate (Score-2), and Poor (Score-1).**

Based on the matrix, Sites 1 and 2 appear to offer the strongest overall alignment with the project goals, particularly in their ability to support Main Street activity and contribute to a more connected museum and cultural district near local businesses and institutions. Site 2 offers the added opportunity to renovate and reuse existing buildings, which could support both preservation and cost-conscious development strategies, while its location within a former rail yard and EPA superfund remedial area may also create opportunities for public funding or government-supported site improvements. Site 1 is also well positioned within the downtown context and benefits from strong visibility and access to nearby activity centers.

Sites 3 and 4 could be considered the next tier of options, with Site 3 still offering strong adjacency to Plaza de Española and nearby cultural assets; however, both sites may present additional challenges because of their proximity to residential areas, where road access, traffic circulation, and privacy concerns could be more difficult to manage. Sites 5 and 6 seem less aligned with the cultural and downtown-focused goals of the project, as they are located outside the primary cultural core, are oriented toward busier corridors rather than a concentrated civic and cultural setting, and would likely require new construction rather than adaptive reuse.

SITE ANALYSIS CRITERIA MATRIX

	CRITERIA	SITE 1: HUNTER FORD *505 N. Paseo de Onate*	SITE 2: COOK'S HOME CENTER *518 N. Paseo de Onate*	SITE 3: WEST PLAZA *Calle Don Diego & E Hill St.*	SITE 4: FORMER EVHS *722 E Hill St.*	SITE 5: NORTH RIVERSIDE *1611 N Riverside Dr*	SITE 6: LUCERO CENTER *NM-285 between Delta and Richard Lucero Center*
1	**SITE DEVELOPMENT**						
	Site Availability (SF/Acreage)	**Good** *~2.19 acres w/ 14,675 SF existing facilities (10,700SF main building and 3,975SF ancillary)*	**Moderate** *~2.68 acres w/ 66,00SF existing facilities (58,870SF main building + 7,130SF ancillary)*	**Good** *~2.35 total undeveloped acres (Lot 1: 1.85 acres + Lot 2: 0.5 acres)*	**Good** *~3.76 acres w/ 37,750SF existing facilities (25,700SF main building + 12,050SF ancillary)*	**Good** *~16.84 total undeveloped acres w/ 9,850SF existing facilities (4,560SF existing main building + ~5,290SF ancillary)*	**Moderate** *1.75 total undeveloped acres*
	Land Ownership	*City of Espanola*	*Privately Owned*	*City of Espanola*	*Rio Arriba County*	*Privately Owned*	*City of Espanola*
	Existing Site Conditions	**Poor** *Site is part of North Railroad Ave. Plume EPA superfund remedial site.*	**Poor** *Site is part of North Railroad Ave. Plume EPA superfund remedial site. Existing facility conditions also suggest further building evaluation is necessary. Lack of availability to accommodate expansion or more parking*	**Moderate** *Site is predominately undeveloped > Site slopes at ~11%*	**Moderate** *Site is predominately undeveloped*	**Moderate** *Site was formerly used for agriculture. Soils, groundwater, utilities, and environmental conditions need assessment/could pose challenges. Site is also along congested city corridor.*	**Moderate** *Site is predominately undeveloped and could pose planning challenges being long, but very narrow in width > Site slopes at ~13%*
	Existing Building Conditions	**Poor** *Facility conditions also suggest further building evaluation is necessary*	**Moderate**	**N/A** **No existing building, this site requires a new construction.**	**Moderate**	**N/A** **No existing building, this site requires a new construction.**	**N/A** **No existing building, this site requires a new construction.**
2	**PARKING**						
	Visitors & Staff	**Good** *~125 spaces on-site > potential use of Espanola Transit Center lot to East for an additonal ~120 spaces of overflow*	**Good** *Can accomodate ~130 spaces on Lot 1*	**Good** *Can accomodate ~130 spaces on Lot 1 Can accomodate ~75 spaces on Lot 2*	**Good** *Can accomodate ~130 spaces on Lot 1*	**Good** *Can accomodate ~130 spaces on Lot 1*	**Moderate** *Adjaceny to Plaza but crosses major street/intersection*
3	**PROXIMITY TO CULTURAL CENTER**						
		Moderate *Adjaceny to Plaza but crosses major street/intersection*	**Moderate** *Adjaceny to Plaza but crosses major street/intersection*	**Good** *Direct adjacency to Plaza de Espanola*	**Good** *Direct adjacency to Plaza de Espanola*	**Poor**	**Poor**
4	**PROXIMITY TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS**						
		Good *Located along Main Street*	**Good** *Located along Main Street*	**Good** *Directly adjacent to Bond House Museum, Veterans Memorial, Mission & Convento*	**Good** *Directly adjacent to Bond House Museum, Veterans Memorial, Mission & Convento*	**Poor**	**Moderate**
5	**PUBLIC TRANSIT**						
		Good *Directly adjacent to Espanola Transit Center Stop / Park & Ride*	**Good** *Directly adjacent to Espanola Transit Center Stop / Park & Ride*	**Moderate** *~4min walk to Bond/Coronado Bus Stop and ~10 min. walk to Espanola Transit Center*	**Moderate** *~4min walk to Bond/Coronado Bus Stop and ~10 min. walk to Espanola Transit Center*	**Poor**	**Moderate**
6	**INFRASTRUCTURE**						
	Sidewalks	**Moderate**	**Moderate**	**Poor**	**Poor**	**Moderate**	**Moderate**
	Roads / Access	**Good**	**Good**	**Moderate**	**Moderate**	**Good**	**Good**
	Vegetation/Shade	**Poor**	**Poor**	**Poor**	**Poor**	**Poor**	**Poor**
	Utilities (Elect, Water, Gas, Sewer)	**Insufficient Information** *Current records of utilities were not provided - site survey is recommended for next phase*	**Insufficient Information** *Current records of utilities were not provided - site survey is recommended for next phase*	**Insufficient Information** *Current records of utilities were not provided - site survey is recommended for next phase*	**Insufficient Information** *Current records of utilities were not provided - site survey is recommended for next phase*	**Insufficient Information** *Current records of utilities were not provided - site survey is recommended for next phase*	**Insufficient Information** *Current records of utilities were not provided - site survey is recommended for next phase*
	RATING SCALE **Good** = 2.5-3 **Moderate** = 1.5-2.49 **Poor** = 1-1.49	*2.20*	*2.20*	*2.22*	*2.20*	*1.89*	*1.89*

IV.
ROUGH ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COST

Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

ROM COST SUMMARY MATRIX

Note: Costs are based on the Site Analyis Criteria Matrix, Google Maps images and historical cost data. All amounts are to be considered allowances pending further design.
Programmed building size (sq. ft.): 20,000

Site size (acres):	2.19	2.68	2.35	3.76	16.84	1.75
Criteria	**Site 1: Hunter Ford**	**Site 2: Cook's Home Center**	**Site 3: West Plaza**	**Site 4: Former EVHS**	**Site 5: North Riverside**	**Site 6: Lucero Center**
Notes:	For comparison only - costs of hazmat cleanup cannot be determined	For comparison only - costs of hazmat cleanup cannot be determined	Empty lots Irregular site	Existing Bldgs. Remodel 20,000 SF plus site improvements assume 2 acres	Empty lot, develop 2 acres only residence exists	Empty lot
New Building & Usable Extr. Space Construction						
Excludes soft costs, FF&E $800	$16,000,000	$16,000,000	$16,000,000		$16,000,000	$16,000,000
Existing Building Renovation	2 Existing Bldgs.	6 Existing Bldgs.				
Demolition of unused bldgs. is not included	Reuse TBD	Reuse TBD	$0	$13,000,000	$0	$0
Site Development Cost						
Grading and drainage	Developed site $5,500	Developed site $6,000	Entire site $78,725	Developed site $5,000	Develop 2 acres $67,000	Develop 1.75 acres $58,625
Demolition of existing site improvements	$18,615	$22,780	$11,750	$17,000	$10,000	$8,750
Pedestrian crossing improvements at No. Riverside Dr.			$0	$0	$200,000	$0
Parking - 130 new spaces, curbs, markings	Upgrade existing areas $200,000	Upgrade existing areas $200,000	$611,000	Upgrade existing areas $200,000	$611,000	$611,000
Infrastructure						
Sidewalks - existing are in poor condition			Irregular site $72,000	Add at site perimeter $100,000		
lewalks - existing are in moderate condition	$25,000	$25,000			$25,000	$20,000
Vegetation ll sites rated poor, assume new landscaping	$170,000	$200,000	$188,000	$160,000	$160,000	$140,000
tilities - assume available in adjacent streets Extend to new buildings	$150,000	$150,000	$250,000	$150,000	$250,000	$250,000
Subtotal	$16,569,115	$16,603,780	$17,211,475	$13,632,000	$17,323,000	$17,088,375
Escalation to 2029 @ 8% per year	$4,970,735	$4,981,134	$5,163,443	$4,089,600	$5,196,900	$5,126,513
Subtotal (w/ escalation)	$21,539,850	$21,584,914	$22,374,918	$17,721,600	$22,519,900	$22,214,888
Contingency @ 25%	$5,384,962	$5,396,229	$5,593,729	$4,430,400	$5,629,975	$5,553,722
Total Cost	$26,924,812	$26,981,143	$27,968,647	$22,152,000	$28,149,875	$27,768,609
	Hazmat Remediation not included	**Hazmat Remediation not included**				

Note: Costs exclude Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment (FF&E), museum exhibits, technology, soft costs such as

V.
APPENDIX

Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

APPENDIX I. REGIONAL CONTEXT AND NATIONAL COMPARABLE CASES RESEARCH, OCTOBER 20, 2025



REGIONAL CONTEXT AND COMPARABLE INSTITUTIONS

The consulting team has compiled lists of relevant national and regional peer institutions along with recent lowrider exhibitions and events:

- **Regional Peers:** A snapshot of peer museums and cultural institutions in Santa Fe and Taos, and a list of local attractions.
- **National Peers:** Automotive museums located throughout the U.S., ranging from small to large in scale, with a sample selected for each.
- **Relevant Exhibitions and Events:** A sample of recent lowrider exhibitions both locally and nationally.

The purpose of this initial research is to provide a snapshot of national peer automotive museums and the regional cultural landscape in which the future Lowrider Museum will operate in. This is not a comprehensive list—we welcome the team to provide feedback and any additional suggestions.

An overview of the operating scale for these existing peer institutions is also included to help inform the planning that will take place in subsequent phases of this project. This work will be further supplemented with market data to better understand how the Museum will be positioned in the regional and national marketplace. It will also help to inform external interview selection and potential community and cultural partners.

REGIONAL: OVERVIEW

The following is a list of museums located in Santa Fe and Taos. This is not a comprehensive list, rather a snapshot of peers to provide context. Attendance at local peer museums ranges from 7K to over 150K visitors a year. The median attendance at peer museums in Santa Fe is approximately 47K and 22K in Taos.

Relevant Peer Museums in Santa Fe	Attendance*
Georgia O'Keeffe Museum*	150,000
Santa Fe Children's Museum	128,739
Spanish Colonial Arts Society	*100,000*
New Mexico Museum of Art	*77,259*
Museum of International Folk Art	68,186
New Mexico History Museum/Palace of the Governors	70,459
San Miguel Mission Church	*65,000*
El Rancho de Las Golondrinas Museum	*55,000*
Museum of Indian Arts & Culture	*37,826*
IAIA Museum of Contemporary Native Arts	*39,761*
The Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian	*33,000*
The Governor's Gallery	*30,000*
Santa Fe Botanical Garden	*28,093*
SITE Santa Fe	*25,000*
Santuario de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe	*21,000*

*Includes the Georgia O'Keeffe House & Studio in Abiquiú, NM

Relevant Peer Museums in Taos	Attendance*
Taos Historic Museums	31,957
Millicent Rogers Museum	25,000
Kit Carson Home & Museum	23,500
The Harwood Museum of Art of the University of New Mexico	20,276
Taos Art Museum	10,000
Governor Bent Museum	7,000
Imagine Taos Exhibit / Children's Museum	N/A
Taos Historic Museums	N/A
Taos County Historical Society	N/A
Turley Mill & Distillery Site	N/A

*Attendance as listed in the Official Museum Directory;
Pending review and data from New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

REGIONAL: OVERVIEW OF ALBUQUERQUE ATTRACTIONS



Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Albuquerque



National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque



Route 66 Visitor Center, Albuquerque

[Delayed opening, transferred to the City, undergoing infrastructure work, staffing, and site master planning, currently presenting pop-up events only.]



El Chante: Casa de Cultura, Albuquerque

Local Context: Lowrider Capital of the World and The Española Lowrider Museum

Efforts to establish a dedicated lowrider museum in Española have long been a community dream, recognizing the profound cultural and economic significance of this art form. Over the years, various initiatives and collaborations have emerged, driven by passionate individuals and community organizations.

These efforts have included community outreach and seeking support from local and state entities. While a permanent, large-scale museum has been in discussion, smaller exhibits and showcases have been held at venues like the Española Bond House Museum (2024), highlighting lowrider artistry, photography, and historical artifacts

In 2018, the Española City Council officially announced: “The City of Española proclaims itself the Lowrider Capital of the World and a cruise-friendly municipality.” In February of 2025, New Mexico House and Senate lawmakers designated February 11 as Lowrider Day.

More recently, in December of 2025, a U.S. Rep. from New Mexico introduced a resolution to make the first Saturday in May National Lowrider Day.





Sources for the information in this page include the RFP for Feasibility Study for a Lowrider Museum in Espanola and press coverage

REGIONAL: OVERVIEW OF LOCAL ATTRACTIONS



Mision y Convento, Plaza de Española



The Historic Bond House and Museum, Española



Española Valley Fiber Arts Center



Los Luceros Historic Site, Alcalde



Santuario de Chimayo. (National Historic Landmark, 300K annual visitors)



Chimayo Museum, Chimayo



Bradbury Science Museum, Los Alamos



Los Alamos History Museum, Los Alamos

NATIONAL: OVERVIEW

The following table shows a snapshot of comparable automotive museums located throughout the nation. These were selected using both the Official Museum Directory* supplemented with an initial web search. It is important to reiterate that this is not a comprehensive list—for example, there are many very small museums, which were excluded. This should be used for context and to better understand operating scale:

- **Large scale museums that are part of a themed attraction have between 200K and 1.7M visitors annually.** These museums are components of themed attractions or parks with significant operating budgets (up to $92M) and resources including space and features such as racetracks, etc.
- **Large scale museums with significant level of programs attract between approx. 72K and 200K visitors each year** and have operating budgets between $2M and $25M.
- **The most relevant are mid-sized, with a significant number of programs—these have an attendance range between 44K and 63K and budgets between approx. 800K and 2M.** *Note: Operating snapshots with additional information about these museums are provided on the following pages.*
- **Smaller scale museums with low level of programs have lower levels of attendance—between 12K and 50K.** These also have much lower operating budget (under $2M)

*The Official Museum Directory is a members database and therefore inclusive of member museums only, it is not comprehensive of all museums.

	Location	Budget	Attendance
Larger Scale / Component of a themed attraction			
Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation	Dearborn, MI	92,700,000	1,700,000
Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum	Leeds, AL	10,005,489	260,000
Darlington Raceway Stock Car Museum, NMPA Hall of Fame	Darlington, SC	N/A	250,000
NASCAR Hall of Fame	Charlotte, NC	N/A	200,000
AACA Museum, Inc. (America's Transportation Experience)	Hershey, PA	1,865,403	N/A
NHRA Motorsports Museum (at Wally Parks)	Pomona, CA	1,295,936	N/A
Orlando Auto Museum	Orlando, FL	N/A	N/A
Volo Museum	Volo, IL	500,000	N/A
Larger Scale / Significant level of programs			
National Corvette Museum	Bowling Green, KY	15,489,060	218,474
Petersen Automotive Museum	Los Angeles, CA	25,688,572	180,000
Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum	Indianapolis, IN	6,556,260	140,000
San Diego Automotive Museum	San Diego, CA	2,450,762	100,000
LeMay America's Car Museum	Tacoma, WA	5,333,322	75,000
Gilmore Car Museum	Hickory Corners, MI	4,099,618	72,250
Revs Institute^	Naples, FL	3,457,793	24,381
Most Relevant: Mid-Size with community programs			
The National Automobile Museum (The Harrah Collection)	**Reno, NV**	**2,168,109**	**62,950**
California Automobile Museum	**Sacramento, CA**	**787,078**	**60,000**
Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum	**Auburn, IN**	**1,968,662**	**44,384**
Smaller Scale / Low level of programs			
Don Garlits Museum of Drag Racing	Ocala, FL	727,629	50,000
Audrain Auto Museum	Newport, RI	1,823,238	30,000
Automotive Hall of Fame, Inc.	Dearborn, MI	2,255,570	30,000
Lane Motor Museum	Nashville, TN		22,000
America's Packard Museum	Dayton, OH	569,987	14,000
Simeone Foundation Automotive Museum	Philadelphia, PA	1,251,797	12,778
Northeast Classic Car Museum	Norwich, NY	880,830	12,000
Nethercutt Museum & Collection	Sylmar, CA	1,129,273	N/A
Martin Auto Museum	Glendale, CA	1,060,015	N/A
Larz Anderson Auto Museum	Brookline, MA	1,035,615	N/A
Museum of Automobiles	Morrilton, AR	417,521	N/A
Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum	Fairbanks, AK	344,529	N/A
Wellborn Musclecar Museum	Alexander City, AL	166,928	N/A

^Seasonal/closes for part of the year

MOST RELEVANT COMPARABLE INSTITUTIONS: SNAPSHOT

The pages to follow provide a snapshot of key operating data as publicly available for each of the 'Most Relevant' museums. These are identified as mid-sized automotive museums that offer significant community programs. A snapshot of notable programs and events at these museums is also provided.

	Location	Budget	Attendance
Most Relevant: Mid-Size with community programs			
The National Automobile Museum (The Harrah Collection)	Reno, NV	2,168,109	62,950
California Automobile Museum	Sacramento, CA	787,078	60,000
Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum	Auburn, IN	1,968,662	44,384

MOST RELEVANT COMPARABLE INSTITUTIONS: SNAPSHOT



Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum

Auburn, IN

Attendance: 44K

Operating Budget: $1.9M

Facilities: **80K+ SF within a historical building** (former Auburn Cord Duesenberg Company), renovated to house more than 140 automobiles. Includes a library, archives, catering facilities, and retail. Top floor dedicated to exhibitions; first floor houses large meeting rooms for various events and receptions.

Program Overview: Exhibits, library/archives, events, lectures, films, tours, performances, community programs, school programs/tours, classes (K-12 and college/training)

Collections: Automobiles, archives, small artifacts, automobile history; art deco; engineering, design & lifestyle; period & classic cars; photographs; literature & memorabilia on cars manufactured in Auburn & their impact on American culture.



California Automobile Museum

Sacramento, CA

Attendance: 60K

Operating Budget: $787K

Facilities: **72K SF** former car dealership with warehouse style/large adaptable space for exhibits, programs/education/classes and events (galas, meetings, conferences), library and archives, sales/showroom space for car sales/consignment.

Program Overview: Exhibits, library/archives, tours, community programs, school programs/tours, classes (children and adults), lectures, flagship annual events and car shows, special events (i.e.. Sunday Drives), car donation and sales/consignment program.

Collections: Over 150 classic cars and motorcycles from various eras—approx. 40% owned by the California Vehicle Foundation, with remaining on loan from private exhibitors allowing for "rolling exhibits" which change frequently.



The National Automobile Museum

Reno, NV

Attendance: 63K

Operating Budget: $2.2M (recent $4M renovation including $1.4M children's center)

Facilities: **105K SF** purpose build to house the Harrah Collection inclusive of 5 gallery spaces (1 rotating), pavilion with a bar area, a state of the art 157 seat theater, two event areas (small to large capacity up to 2K), interactive Children's Educational Activities Center (3K SF), two shops, recording/podcast space.

Program Overview: Exhibits, research library, tours, community programs, school programs/tours, classes (children), annual and special events, symposium, performances, lectures, films, festivals.

Collections: 225+ cars, laid out with "street scenes"—thematic faux streets with gallery façades and storefronts, connecting car galleries chronologically.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

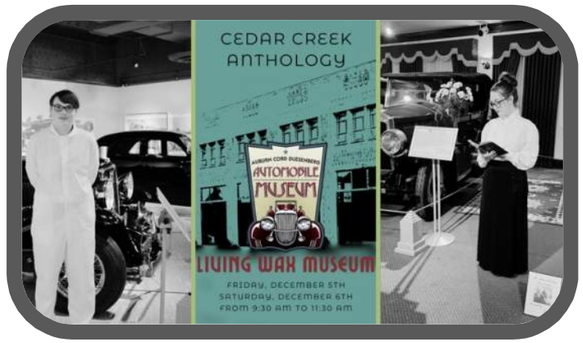
AUBURN CORD DUESENBERG AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

Programs & Events for Families and Audiences of All Ages

Partnerships with local organizations such as the Girl Scouts for mechanical engineering workshops and other cultural organizations to integrate automobiles into other genres such as performance art.

Free informal family events centered around a car themes offered throughout the year and seasonally such as “Trunk of Treat”.









Classes & Workshops customized for learning levels/ages to promote continual learning.
Sampling of programs include:

- Crash Lab (Grades 3-5)
- Race Car Building (Grades 5-8)
- Assembly Line/Production (Grades 3-6)
- Innovation/Design (Grades 9-12)
- Careers In Automotive (High School/College)





CALIFORNIA AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM



Vehicle Sales Program

Reported as a key revenue stream—each year dozens of cars are either donated to the Museum or consigned through their consignment sales program. All cars donated to the Museum are presented to the exhibits committee and can either be added to the collection or benefit the Museum through the sales program. The Museum has evolved to be a premier venue for buying and selling cars, attracting several hundred visitors to the sales floor every month and thousands of online visitors and inquiries. In 2023, reported 55 cars through this program.



AUTOMOTIVE PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

This class will discuss the use of cell phones and Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) cameras like Canon, Sony, and Nikon for automotive photography. This class is oriented toward digital photography and will include demonstrations on how to use Adobe Photoshop to enhance your photography.

$45 Non-Member / $35 Member

Please check at another time for the next session of this class (TBD).

OUR WORLD-FAMOUS DOCENT CLASS!

Docents are the Heart and Soul of the Community. Our docents are the educators for the Museum and the personal outreach to our visitors.

MODEL A BASICS & DRIVING

This class is designed to give students an understanding of Model A constructions, nomenclature, operation and basic maintenance and history. Each student will then have the opportunity to drive a Model A!

$99 Non-Member / $89 Member

AUTOMOTIVE 101

This class will give a basic understanding of the construction and operations of the modern automobile, its maintenance needs, dos and don'ts when dealing with mechanic shops, and avoiding overselling and scams.

MODEL T BASICS & DRIVING

This class is designed to give students an understanding of Model T constructions, nomenclature, operation and basic maintenance and history. Each student will then have the opportunity to drive a Model T!

$110 Non-Member / $100 Member

BASIC ENGINE COURSE

This is a hands-on, 3 hour class aimed at students 10+. Students learn how an engine works by taking apart a single cylinder engine to see how the solids, liquids and gases interact to make it run. Students also get to fire up an engine to see how it gets its job done.

Affordable community classes for all levels – ranging from intro/automotive 101 to mechanical for car enthusiasts and art (photography).







E.L. Wiegand Children's Educational Activity Center

Newly opened in 2024, this 3K SF interactive space is divided into five distinct sections designed for different age groups and learning styles:

- Design studio where kids can choose different automobile types, design them, and see their work displayed on a billboard.
- Build-a-race-car activity, which helps teach principles like how weight or size affect speed.
- Virtual driving / navigation experience, where kids can "drive" through Reno streets using body or arm movement.
- Hands-on section with a scale automobile, where parts like tires or subcomponents can be explored.
- A workshop area for children to build things using ropes, pulleys, blocks, and other materials to develop mechanical and engineering thinking.

THE NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

Professional programs & events

Networking events; annual symposiums; state-of-the-art podcast and production studio available for the community to showcase expertise, highlight products, and engage with a wider audience.



RELEVANT REGIONAL LOWRIDER EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

RELEVANT REGIONAL LOWRIDER EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS

Several peer museums have recently presented lowrider exhibits that celebrate the artistry, engineering, and cultural significance of customized car design, reflecting a growing recognition of lowrider culture. There are also some existing lowrider centered community events held regionally. A snapshot is provided below, with an overview for each of these events provided in the pages to follow.

Regional	
Exhibits	
Nuevo Mexicano Heritage Arts Museum: Lowrider Bike Club: Beyond the Bike (2024)	Santa Fe, NM
New Mexico History Museum: Lowriders, Hoppers, and Hot Rods: Car Culture of Northern New Mexico (2017)	Santa Fe, NM
New Mexico History Museum: Con Cariño: Artists Inspired by Lowriders (2016)	Santa Fe, NM
Harwood Museum of Art: Santo Lowride: Norteño Car Culture and the Santos Tradition (2021)	Taos, NM
Events	
Española Good Friday Lowrider	Española, NM
Española Low Rider Day Parade	Española, NM
Lowrider Day on the Plaza	Santa Fe, NM
Lowrider BBQ	Santa Fe, NM
Albuquerque Supershow	Albuquerque, NM
National	
Exhibits	
Petersen Automotive Museum: Best in Low: Lowrider Icons of the Street and Show (2025)	Los Angeles, CA
Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum: Exhibits featuring Chicano art/lowrider culture	Riverside, CA
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: Sitting On Chrome: Mario Ayala, rafa esparza, and Guadalupe Rosales (2023–2024)	San Francisco, CA
The National Automobile Museum: Boulevard Lowrider Exhibit (2025)	Reno, NV
Bullock Texas State History Museum: Carros y Cultura: Lowriding Legacies in Texas (2024)	Austin, TX
Sacramento History Museum: Boulevard Dreams (2023–2024)	Sacramento, CA
Traveling Exhibits	
National Museum of American History: Corazón y vida: Lowriding Culture (2023–2029)	Washington, DC

RELEVANT REGIONAL LOWRIDER EXHIBITIONS AND EVENTS



Image: Santa Fe New Mexican

Nuevo Mexicano Heritage Arts Museum

Lowrider Bike Club: Beyond the Bike (2024)

Española teens showcasing custom lowrider bicycles while offering mentorship and fostering arts within the youth community in partnership with the YMCA Teen Center.



Image: New Mexico History Museum

New Mexico History Museum

Lowriders, Hoppers, and Hot Rods: Car Culture of Northern New Mexico (2017)

Focused on mobile works of art and their makers—home-grown Nuevomexicanos who customize, detail, paint, and upholster these favorite symbols of Hispanic culture.



Image: New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

Nuevo Mexicano Heritage Arts Museum

Con Cariño: Artists Inspired by Lowriders (2016)

Artists explore issues of family, gender, religion, and community. Some coming to lowriders as outsiders to the culture and others using lowriders to investigate their own heritage and traditions.

REGIONAL LOWRIDER EVENTS: OVERVIEW

Española Good Friday Lowrider

A long-standing tradition that emerged informally and has evolved into a cherished annual community event, Show-n-Shine gathers all clubs, this a multigenerational alcohol-free family event with music and food that attracts thousands of lowrider enthusiasts from across the state.



Image: Matthew Fagan via Santa Fe Bulletin Board



Image: Bob Beckert photography

REGIONAL LOWRIDER EVENTS: OVERVIEW

Española Lowrider Day Parade

Originated in 2017, organized by Española Lowrider Association. Multigenerational local event that celebrates lowrider culture in Española with live music, dancing, and food.



Image: **Jim Weber for The New Mexican**



Image: **Bob Beckert photography**

REGIONAL LOWRIDER EVENTS: OVERVIEW

Española Lowrider Phenomena

Originated in 2023, hosted by the Ohkay Hotel Casino.

Annual event, with rides and entertainment for the general public and all ages.



REGIONAL LOWRIDER EVENTS: OVERVIEW

Lowrider Day in the Santa Fe Plaza

Originated in 2016 when the mayor lifted a ban on lowrider cruising and declared a special day to celebrate the culture. Hundreds of cars gather to cruise and celebrate and includes lowrider displays, live music, food and other vendors.

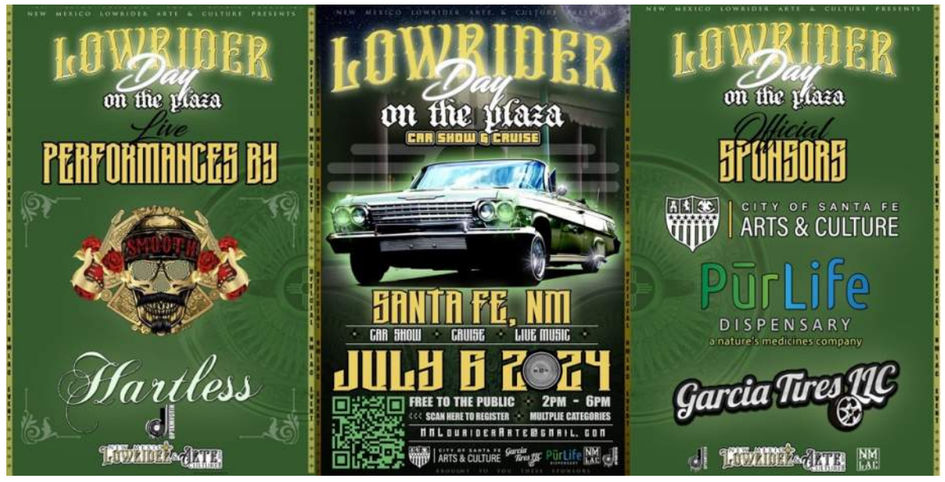



Image: New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

REGIONAL LOWRIDER EVENTS: OVERVIEW



Image: Rob Vanderslice, From the Darkness Into the Light,, 2013, painting on 1996 Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham. Photograph by Corey Ringo. Courtesy of the artists.

Harwood Museum of Art, Taos, NM

Santo Lowrider: Norteño Car Culture and the Santos Tradition (2021)

The unique story of New Mexico's interwoven expressions of devotional art and lowrider culture.



Image: New Mexico Supershow

Albuquerque Supershow

Albuquerque, NM

A showcase of lowriders, custom builds, automotive artistry, and related car culture. An annual event held at the Albuquerque Convention Center. It features vehicle exhibitions, vendors, performances, and car-show culture elements.

RELEVANT NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS: OVERVIEW



Image: Best in Low Exhibit
Source: Forbes

Peterson Museum of Art

Best in Low (May 2024 – May 2025)

Explored the craftsmanship of lowriders and the impact of the culture on the customization scene. Highlighted the diversity of the culture through the region for the first time, including cars and motorcycles from Northern California, New Mexico, Texas and Japan, as well as feature cars owned and worked on by women."

Curators: Co-curated by the Petersen Automotive Museum and Dr. Denise Sandoval (guest curator); curatorial advisor Joe Ray.

Attendance: Noted as top attended exhibit.

RELEVANT NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS: OVERVIEW



Image Courtesy of Riverside Art Museum


Image Courtesy of American Federation of Arts

Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture of the Riverside Art Museum

Ongoing exhibitions featuring Chicano art and lowrider culture

Most recent: Xican-a.o.x. Body, which features a piñata lowrider by artist Justin Favela. The Riverside Art Museum and Cheech Center currently serve as a core part of the city's arts district hub and offer notable community engagement programs and events for all ages.

Current plans for a lowrider museum in Riverside: Building off the success of current exhibitions, Marin envisions starting the first lowrider museum in Riverside, consolidating the city's position as a burgeoning art hub.

RELEVANT NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS: OVERVIEW

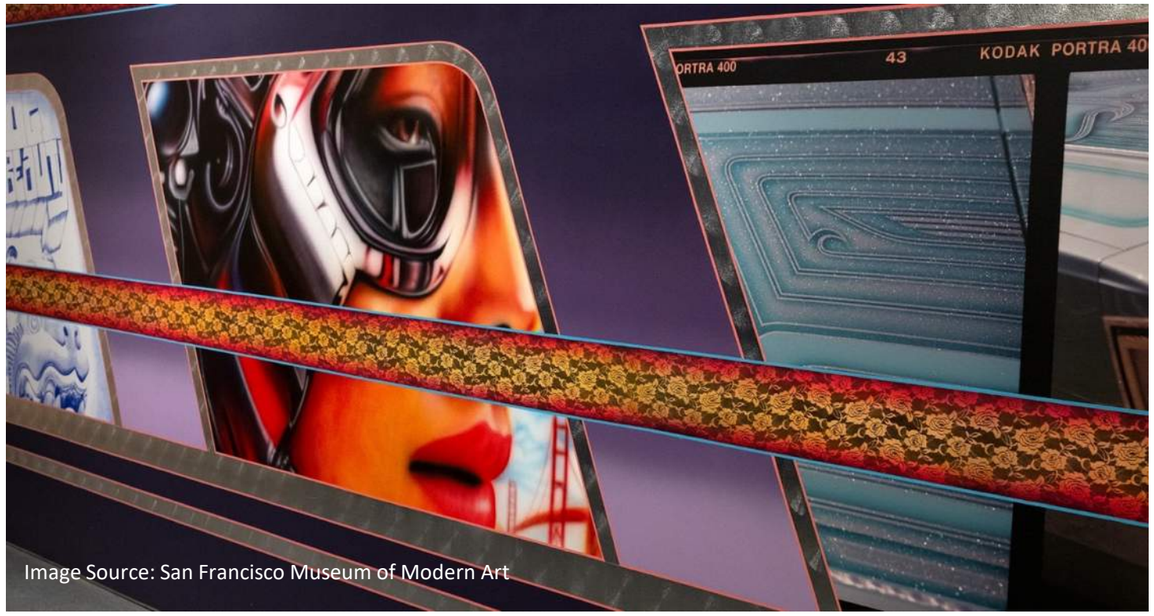


Image Source: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

San Francisco Museum Of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA

Sitting On Chrome: Mario Ayala, Rafa Esparza, and Guadalupe Rosales (Aug 2023 – Feb 2024)

Ccollaborative exhibition engaging the visual language of lowriders and exploring cruising as a practice of resistance and community visibility. Reflecting on their own early experiences, transformed four galleries through vibrant, multisensory installations with related performances by Rafa Esparza.

Curators: Jovanna Venegas, Tomoko Kanamitsu, and Maria Castro


Image: The National Automobile Museum

The National Automobile Museum, Reno, NV

Low and Slow (2021); Boulevard Lowrider Exhibit (2023)

Low and Slow engaged Lowrider Community Members (Richard Lopez, George Luna, and Tony Castellanos, who co-curated the exhibition with the museum staff, as a celebration of lowrider culture that include all types of vehicles and related music and artworks.

Boulevard Lowrider presented a historical journey featuring 11 vehicles from local car clubs.

RELEVANT NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS: OVERVIEW



Image: Bullock Texas State History Museum

Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin, TX

Carros y Cultura: Lowriding Legacies in Texas (2024)

Bilingual and interactive exhibit representing the culture in multimedia including cars, bikes, other artifacts from music, fashion, and beyond. Also included in-person events including expert talks, activities for kids, and workshops for teens.



Image: Sacramento History Museum

Sacramento History Museum, Sacramento, CA

Boulevard Dreams (2023 - 2024)

In partnership with the Sacramento Lowrider Commission, exhibit introduces some of the stories of the clubs, fashion, music, and art, through memorabilia shared by local lowrider club members. The exhibit also explores the discrimination and prejudice that led to the city-wide ban on cruising in the 1980s.

RELEVANT NATIONAL TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS: OVERVIEW



Image: National Museum of American History

National Museum of American History, Washington, DC

Corazón y Vida: Lowriding Culture (2025 - 2029)

Bilingual exhibition showcasing the craftmanship and traditions of lowriding culture within the historical context of Mexican American and Chicano culture. The exhibition includes classic cars, objects, photos, and prints.

A traveling version of the exhibition: Lowrider Culture in the United States/Cultura Lowrider en los Estados Unidos, will feature a selection of photographs, prints, and objects.

Future venues: Anaheim, CA; Port Hueneme, CA; Farmington, NM; Tucson, AZ; Fresno, CA; Overland Park, KS; and Scottsdale, AZ.

The exhibition tour organized in collaboration with Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service and the National Museum of the American Latino.

RELEVANT NATIONAL EVENTS: OVERVIEW



Image: Detroit Historical Museum



Image: 'Maura,' a 2023 documentary directed by Gabriel Paez Hernandez . Source: Voices of Monterey Bay

Annual Lowrider Show

Detroit Historical Museum, Detroit, MI

The Museum hosts an annual outdoor lowrider show as part of the Concert of Colors event, filling their parking lot with a showcase of lowrider cars presented by the USO Car Club of Detroit. The event is a celebration of custom culture, music, and food showcase of lowrider cars and free to the community.

Watsonville Film Festival

Watsonville, CA (2024)

Film festival featuring lowriders, live music and a celebration of Latin American film and music. Featured an exhibition: More Than Cars: Celebrating Lowrider Culture," at Pajaro Valley Arts in Watsonville.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES

The team collected key operating data (budget, attendance, exhibit and program overview), as available, for the following museums:

- Peterson Automotive Museum
- The Henry Ford Museum
- Art Car Museum

These range from aspirational examples to lessons learned from a closed automotive museum. Aspects from each of these can be further studied and scaled to inform future planning phases.

CASE STUDIES: PETERSEN AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES, CA

OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

Attendance: 180,000 (approx. 2K each weekend; largest age group segment is 35-44 followed by 24-34); Non-car enthusiasts drawn by educational and historical exhibits.

Operating Budget: $25.7M (Exhibitions $12M; Collections & Curatorial $6.5M; Education $2.7M); Recent $100M Capital campaign focused on rehabilitation and cultural relevance).

Exhibits: 100K+ SF; Exhibits rotate 7–12 times per year and reported as a major attendance driver. Peak attendance is in summer; exhibition rotation ensures “always something new”.

Key Programs: Teen workshops; career fairs; academic partnerships (emphasis on business-to-academic pipeline/recruiting, job creation).

Key Features: Car elevator, expanded exhibit space, and active event programming (private + community).



Image: Petersen Automotive Museum

PETERSEN AUTO MUSEUM

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1994 by business magnate Robert E Petersen, the Petersen Automobile Museum contains one of the world's largest collections of rare and unique cars. Built originally in 1962 as a Japanese department store and later a luxury commercial center, the building was renovated and expanded in 2015 by KPF architects. Divided by floor into history, artistry, and industry, the museum has numerous permanent and temporary exhibitions. A below-ground exhibition known as the "vault" contains 300 of the rarest vehicles ever assembled. Lastly, the museum features a street-side cafe and a rooftop penthouse/terrace ideal for events.



Location: 6060 Wilshire Blvd, Los Angeles CA
Date Built: 1962 (Renovated in 1965, 1994, and 2015)
Size (SF): 200,000 SF
2015 Renovation Cost: $90,000,000
Architect: Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates
Consultants:

- The Scenic Route - *Interior Design*
- A. Zahner Company - *Facade installation & fabrication*
- Wallace Engineering - *Structural*

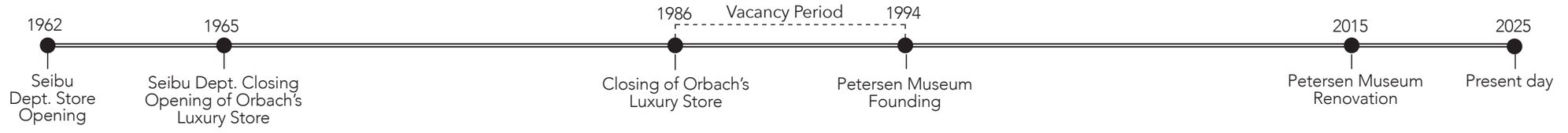
TIMELINE


Seibu Department Store


Pre-2015 Petersen Museum

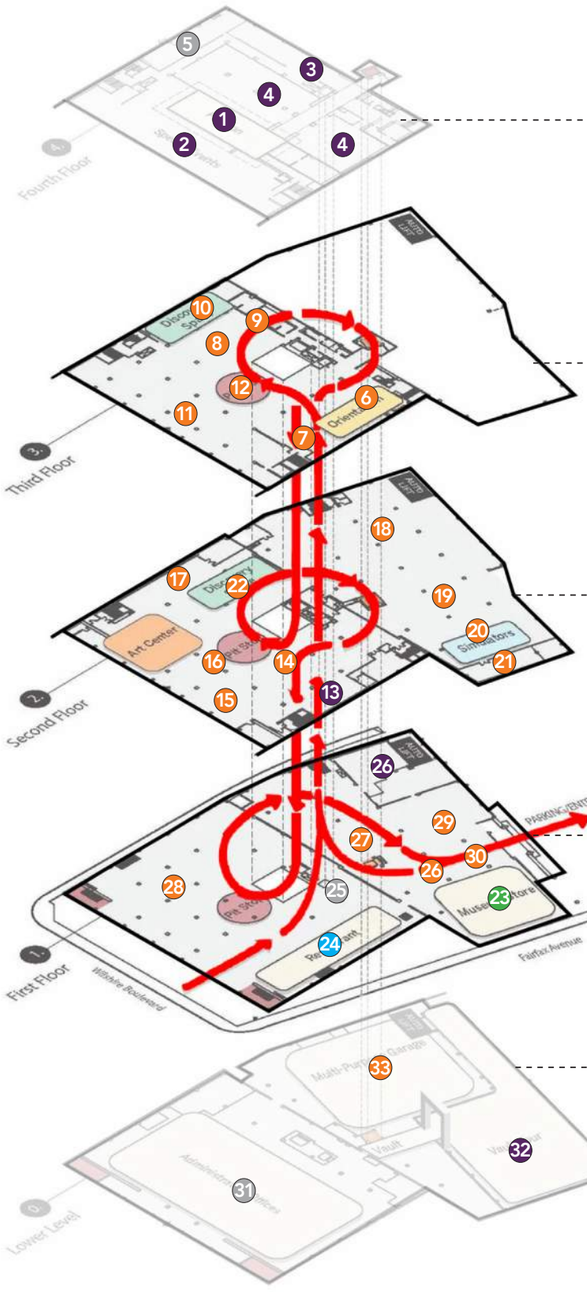

2015 Construction


Petersen Museum Post-Renovation



PROGRAM

MUSEUM FLOOR PLANS



EVENT FLOOR - PENTHOUSE + PATIO

Total SF: 17,400 SF
Total Exhibits: 0

1. Penthouse for events
2. Rooftop patio for events
3. Event Staging
4. Indoor event rooms
5. Catering kitchen

EXHIBIT FLOOR - AUTOMOBILE HISTORY

Total SF: 46,900 SF
Total Exhibits: 7

6. Museum Introduction
7. Why We Love the Automobile
8. Special Exhibition Area
9. LA: The Living City Mural
10. Concept Cars & Art
11. Cars of Film & Television
12. SOCAL: A Region in Motion

EXHIBIT FLOOR - AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Total SF: 47,500 SF
Total Exhibits: 9

13. Mullin Design Studio
14. Industry Professionals
15. Vehicle Manufacturing
16. High-Performance Cars
17. Alternative Power
18. Special Exhibition Area
19. Motorcycles
20. Motorsports
21. Forza Motorsport Experience
22. Discovery Center

EXHIBIT FLOOR - AUTOMOBILE ARTISTRY

Total SF: 53,200 SF
Total Exhibits: 4

23. Petersen Gift Shop
24. Meyers Manx Cafe
25. Admissions Desk
26. Car Workshop
27. Automotive Art & Design
28. Artistry of the Automobile
29. Art and the Automobile
30. Concourse Centerpiece

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS - RARE CAR VAULT

Total SF: 58,400 SF
Total Exhibits: 1

31. Administrative Offices
32. Vault Tour Staging Area
33. Rare Car Garage (300 cars)

Program Key

- Gallery/Exhibit
- Food
- Event/Activity
- Support/Admin
- Retail

EXHBITS + MUSEUM PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

In addition to its 11 permanent and 10 temporary/rotating exhibitions, the museum offers a wide variety of community outreach programs, such as a hands-on youth program exploring design challenges and the history and science of the automobile. An automobile workshop taught by professional car mechanics teaches car maintenance, roadside care, and auto detailing to teens and young adults. Lastly, the museum also provides hosting for events.

TEMPOARY & CURRENT EXHIBITIONS



Permament - Cars of Film & Television



Temporary - Totally Awesome Cars of the 80s & 90s



Past Exhibition - Lowriders Best in Low

MUSEUM PROGRAMS



Mini Motors Youth Program



Automobile Maintenance Workshop



Museum Event Hosting

CASE STUDIES: THE HENRY FORD MUSEUM, DEARBORN, MI

OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

Attendance: 1.7M

Operating Budget: $92.7M

Exhibit Space: 500K+ SF/over 9 acres within museum complex (including Greenfield Village, grounds, etc.) spans about 250 acres in total. complex includes three main attractions: the indoor Museum of American Innovation, the outdoor living history experience at Greenfield Village, and the Ford Rouge Factory Tour

Exhibit: Lowriders: Connecting to Community (2021)



Image Source: Motorcities.org

The Henry Ford Museum

INTRODUCTION

Opening in 1931, the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation, located in Dearborn, Michigan, is both a monument and a showcase of American inventions and technological artifacts. The museum, which spans over 12 acres of indoor gallery area, is a steel-framed, brick-clad structure and was designed to mimic Independence Hall in Philadelphia, harkening back to the individualist free-thinking ideas of the American Declaration of Independence. Regarding exhibitions, the museum contains historic automobiles, aircraft, locomotives, objects of design, science, and American social change. The museum also includes a visitor center, IMAX theater, two restaurants, and two gift shops. Lastly, the museum serves as a host for numerous community events and learning experiences, including tours of the nearby Ford Rouge manufacturing plant.



Location: 20900 Oakwood Blvd, Dearborn, MI
Date Built: 1929
Size (SF): 538,000 SF
Building Cost: $100 Million (2025) (Adjusted for Inflation)
Architect: Robert O. Derrick

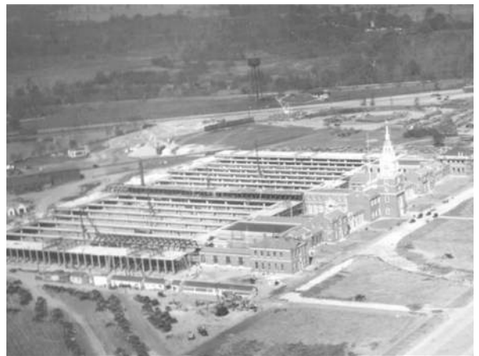
TIMELINE



1906 - Highland Park Collections



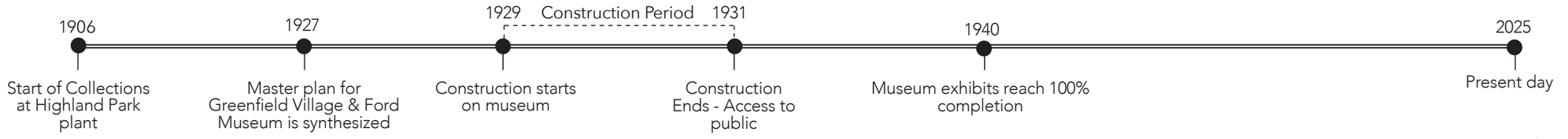
1929 - Concept Rendering



1929 - 1931 Construction



1931 - Finished Building



1

PROGRAM

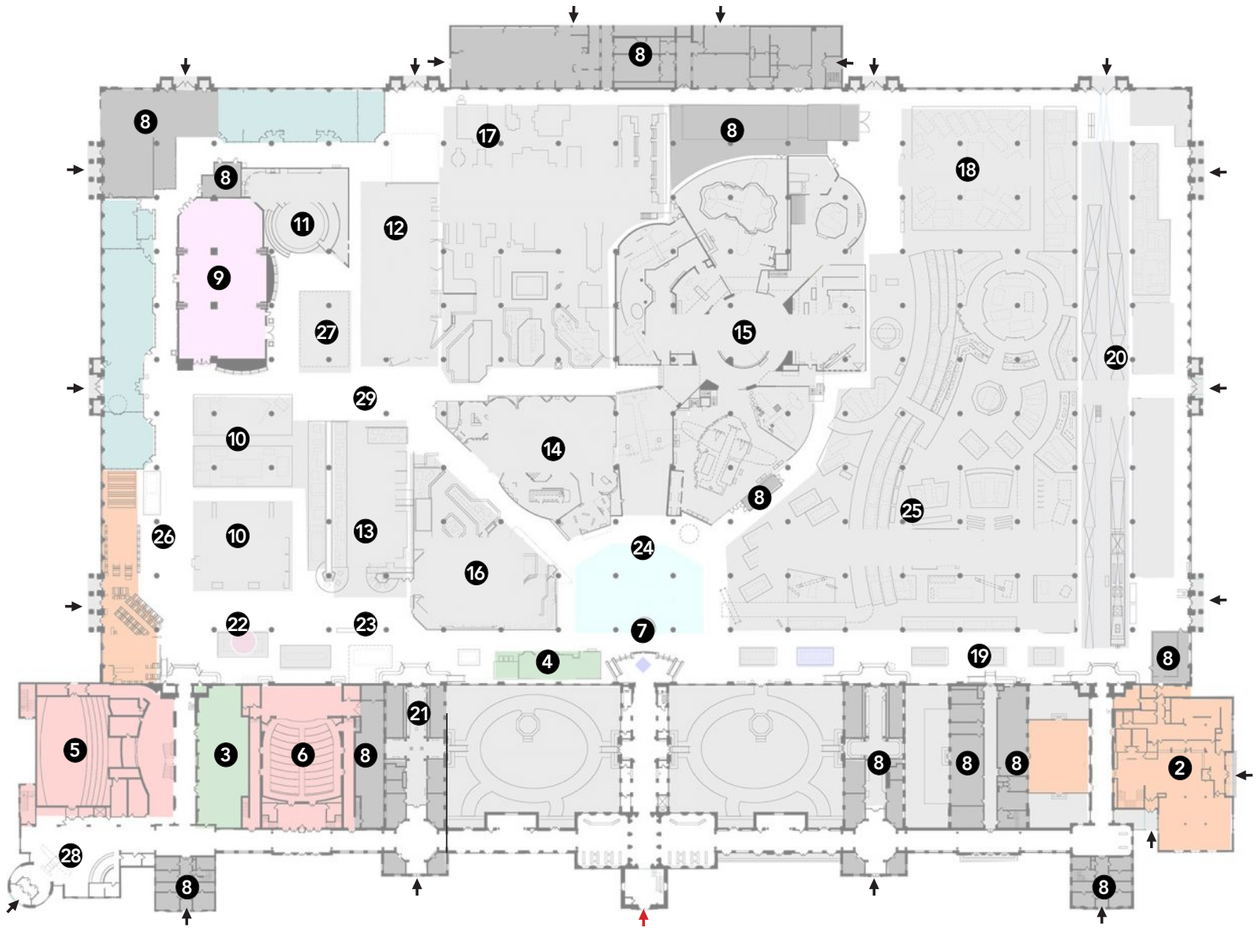
MUSEUM FLOOR PLAN

Total SF: 538,000 SF
Total Exhibits: 22 Themed Galleries
Program:

1. Lamy's Diner
2. Plum Market Kitchen
3. Henry Ford Museum Store
4. Genius at Play
5. IMAX Theater
6. Anderson Theater
7. Recpetion
8. Collections & Exhibit Support

Exhibits:

9. The Gallery by GM
10. Agriculture
11. Dymaxion House
12. Your Place in Time
13. Fully Furnished
14. With Liberty and Justice for All
15. Heroes of the Sky
16. Made in America: Manufacturing
17. Made in America: Power
18. Driving America
19. Presidential Vehicles
20. Railroads
21. Davidson-Gerson Modern Glass Gallery
22. Clockwork
23. Mathematica
24. Intersection of Innovation
25. Driven to Win: Racing in America
26. What We Wore
27. Art Pottery of the 20th Century
28. Collections Gallery
29. Miniature Moments: Hallmark



EXHBITS + MUSEUM PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

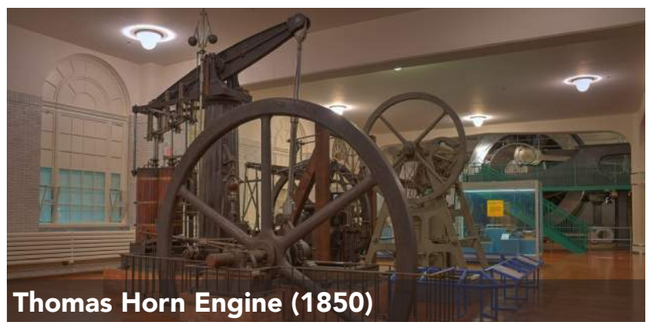
In addition to its 22 exhibition areas, the museum offers a wide variety of hosted events and amenities, such as an annual old car festival showcasing historic vehicles (one of the oldest in the United States). The museum also provides tours of the nearby Ford Rouge factory, showcasing an active modern vehicle production line. Lastly, the museum hosts an IMAX theater with adjustable dynamic screens, located adjacent to the museum's visitor center, and cafe.

EXHIBITIONS



Byrd Arctic Expedition Exhibit

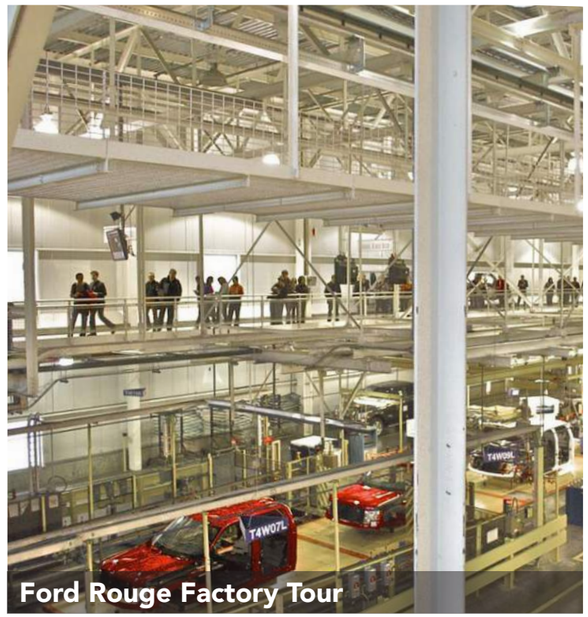

Dymaxion House Exhibit


Thomas Horn Engine (1850)

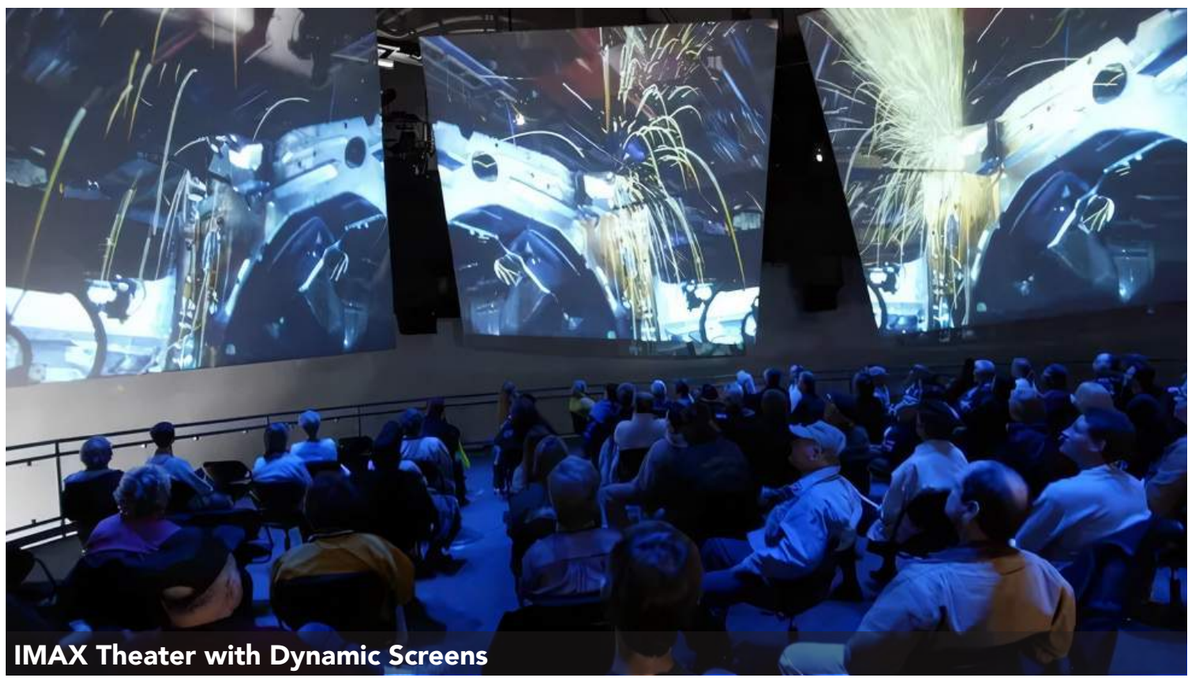
MUSEUM PROGRAMS



Old Car Festival



Ford Rouge Factory Tour


IMAX Theater with Dynamic Screens

CASE STUDIES: ART CAR MUSEUM, HOUSTON, TX

OVERVIEW

Location: Houston, TX

Overview: Founded in 1998 by Ann Harithas, artist and long-time supporter of the Art Car movement, and James Harithas, who provided sole support for every aspect of the museum, from operations to exhibitions until their recent passings in 2021 and 2023, respectively. The museum closed in 2024 and its website states it is exploring new operational models to maintain and evolve Haritha's vision and legacy. The Orange Show has since taken over running the popular Art Car Parade and has received a grant from the Harithas Family for the museum's legacy to be integrated into The Orange Show Center for Visionary Art's new 3,000SF building and campus located nearby.

Notable Exhibits/Programs: Houston Art Car Parade

Annual Attendance: (Art Car Parade) 250K+



Image: Art Car Parade in Downtown Houston
Source: Downtown Houston

CASE STUDIES: ART CAR MUSEUM, HOUSTON, TX

LESSONS LEARNED FROM A CLOSED MUSEUM

Museum vs gallery: The concept of the museum was perceived by some art car community members as running counter to the art car movement; it operated as a private art gallery and collection.

Reported preliminary plans to reopen seek to address old perceptions, envisioning instead a shared art space, closer to a museum model focused on the grass roots origins of the art cart movement in Lawndale in the 1980s.

Better connection to the community (not just an art focus): The museum was initially most deeply invested in highlighting art over other community-oriented elements. Future changes may highlight the community and personal dimensions of the art car movement.

Importance of activating the space with programs: News reports indicate the new space may host workshops on folk-art techniques, and other technical skills such as welding, seeking to engage and expand the art car community in Houston.



Image: Art Car Museum

APPENDIX II. COMMUNITY SURVEY FINDINGS: DECEMBER 9, 2025



OVERVIEW

Overview & Methodology

The community survey was administered via SurveyMonkey in November 2025 and received a total of **144 responses**.

The survey was designed to be completed at the "community hangout and conversation" that took place on November 14, 2025, at the Parking Lot North of the Center for the Arts, Northern New Mexico College. The event included a cruise, performance, project intro by elected officials, and informal community conversations. **Over 150 people participated**, and the consulting team encouraged attendees take the survey in person or scan a QR code to complete it later.

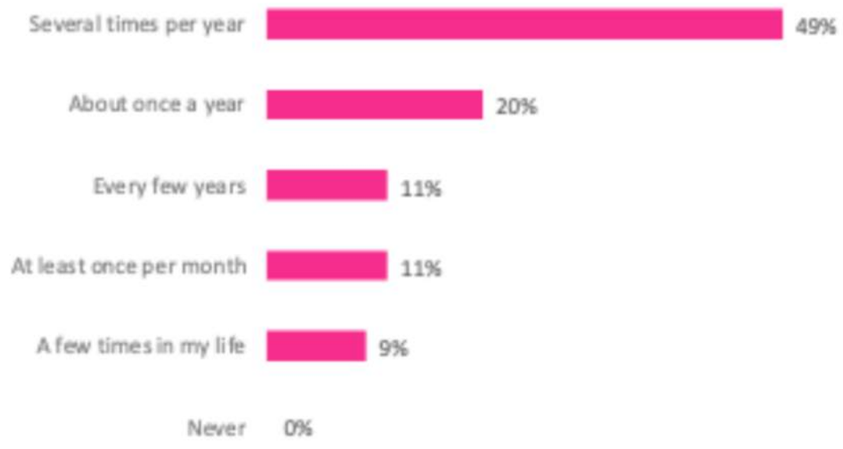
The survey was also shared on social media, targeting the northern New Mexico lowrider community to ensure a stable sample size and broaden participation among community members who may not have been able to attend in person.



MUSEUM ENGAGEMENT & INTEREST

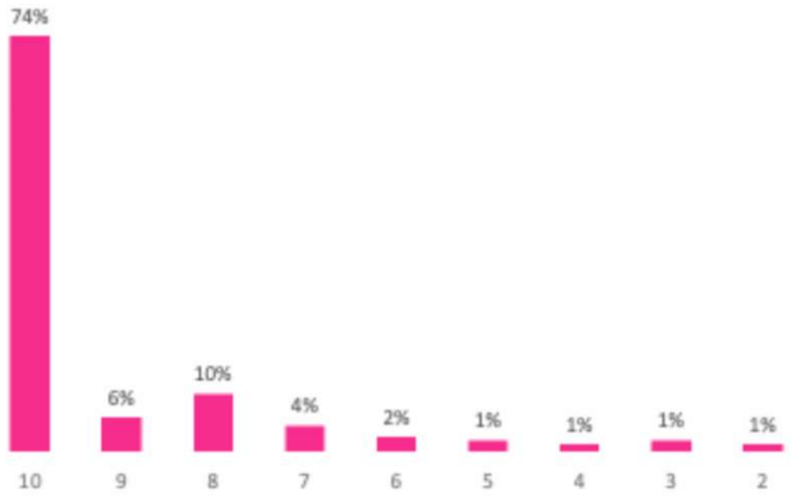
A majority of survey participants indicated that they visit a museum at least annually (80%), with 46% attending several times a year and 11% visiting at least once a month. This level of visitation suggests a significant potential audience for museum programming. Interest in a lowrider themed museum is especially high, with respondents reporting an average excitement level of 9.3 out of 10.

How often do you visit museums?



Q1; n=144

On a scale of 1 to 10 how excited would you be to visit a lowrider themed museum?



Q2; n=144

LOWRIDER MUSEUM INTEREST

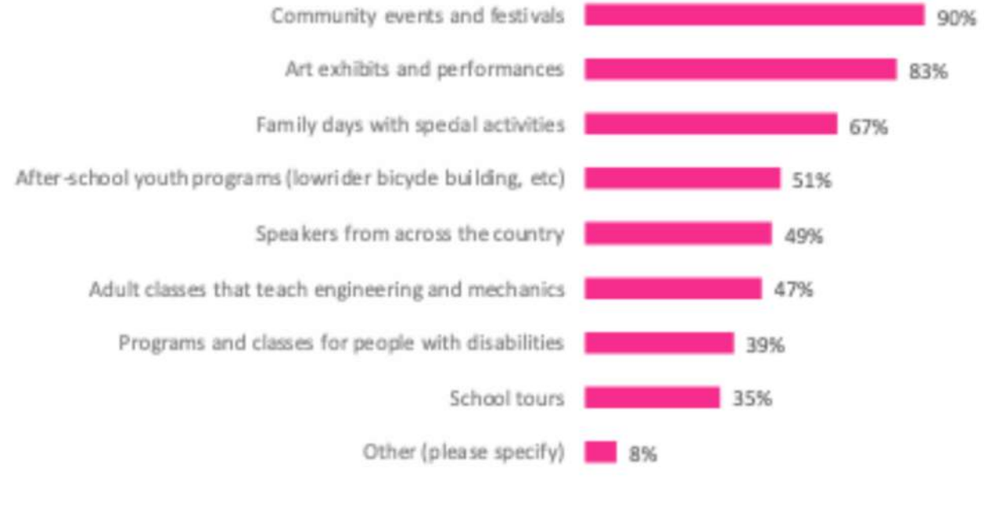
There is strong overall interest in lowrider culture and history, with especially high enthusiasm for viewing lowriders on display. Programming preferences leaned heavily toward community events and festivals (90%) as well as art exhibits and performances (83%), with significant interest in family days (67%) and afterschool youth programs (51%).

How interested would you be in the following:

	Very Interested	Interested	Somewhat Interested	Neutral	Not Interested
Learning about how lowriders are made	71%	22%	4%	3%	1%
Learning more about the history of lowriding	74%	22%	3%	1%	1%
Exploring the culture around lowriding (cruising, music, art, contests)	76%	16%	5%	2%	1%
Seeing lowriders on display	89%	6%	4%	1%	0%
Learning about lowriders from around the world	76%	17%	5%	3%	0%
Connecting with lowriders from other parts of the U.S.	65%	21%	6%	5%	3%
Building community among lowriders in New Mexico	72%	16%	7%	3%	2%

Q3; n=144

What activities would you be interested in attending? (Check all that apply.)



Q4; n=144

LOWRIDER MUSEUM HISTORY & EVENT INTEREST

41 respondents replied to an optional question:

Name any specific historical moments or events that the museum should feature.

There is a strong overall interest in incorporating historical content that highlights both the local history and cultural significance of lowrider communities, as well as a broader historical narrative that connects these stories to the national context.

Broader Lowrider History & Culture (11 mentions)

- A historical perspective of lowriding from its inception to the present day.
- Guest speakers from back in the day to talk about the history and the culture about lowriding.
- How generations of families with lowriders have been collecting.
- Houston lowriders and lowriders as a bridge of community.
- Lowrider culture and history in connection to other parts of Chicano heritage, culture and political movements.
- General lowrider culture, historical photos, history, archives, vintage pictures and stories.
- Indigenous cultures.
- All lowrider, not just high-dollar vehicles.
- Paño arte.

Local Lowrider / New Mexico History & Culture (9 mentions)

- Document the history of lowriders in Espanola and surrounding areas from the people and family members of the deceased who had lowriders in the 70s and 80s.
- The older generation OG lowriders of our community.
- Chicano/Pachuco history.
- General Española lowrider history.
- 1980s lowrider shows in Espanola.
- Incorporating documentaries including “Rolling Altars” and books.
- Population movements during WWII that exposed New Mexicans to other states' automobile endeavors.

Q5; n=41

LOWRIDER MUSEUM HISTORY & EVENT INTEREST (CONT.)

Respondents also emphasized the importance of incorporating and celebrating significant historical events while also providing welcoming, family friendly spaces and opportunities for community gathering. Many also highlighted the value of integrating local art, crafts, culinary traditions, and meaningful opportunities for artists to participate and showcase their work..

Community/Historical Events
(14 mentions)

- Good Friday cruises and celebrations connecting to its community and cultural significance
- Route 66 events
- Local lowrider Culture
- Cinco de Mayo, Española's birthday, Dios de los Muertos
- Lowrider Day
- Proclamations made to honor different community gatherings. Legislative bills & displays in courtyard.

Family Events
(4 mentions)

- Lowrider Day Family Events
- A multi-purpose room that can be rented out for receptions, graduation parties, etc.
- Different family activities concerning lowriders and 3 wheeled motorized bikes, etc.
- Car shows, music, entertainment

Local Arts/Crafts/Culinary Traditions
(3 mentions)

- Local art and culture
- Local artist displays
- Feature local art & crafts and food vendors that focus on local foods.

Q5; n=41

LOWRIDER MUSEUM PARTICIPATION

There is an exceptionally strong interest in visiting and engaging with the museum, particularly through exhibitions and community oriented experiences. A majority of respondents show interest in visiting several times a year (69%).

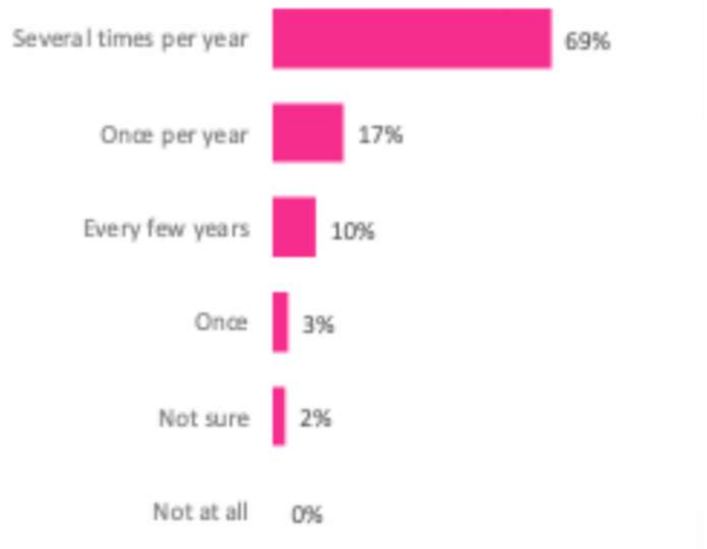
Nearly all respondents (97%) indicated they would visit exhibitions, making this the most popular form of engagement. A large majority also expressed interest in attending community festivals and lowrider car shows featuring art, food, and music (83%), and bringing friends and relatives to visit (77%), suggesting strong word-of-mouth and group appeal. More than half of respondents (53%) are interested in special programs and events, such as live demonstrations or lectures.

How do you imagine participating? Select all that apply.



Q6; n=144

How often do you imagine visiting the lowrider museum in Española? Select one.



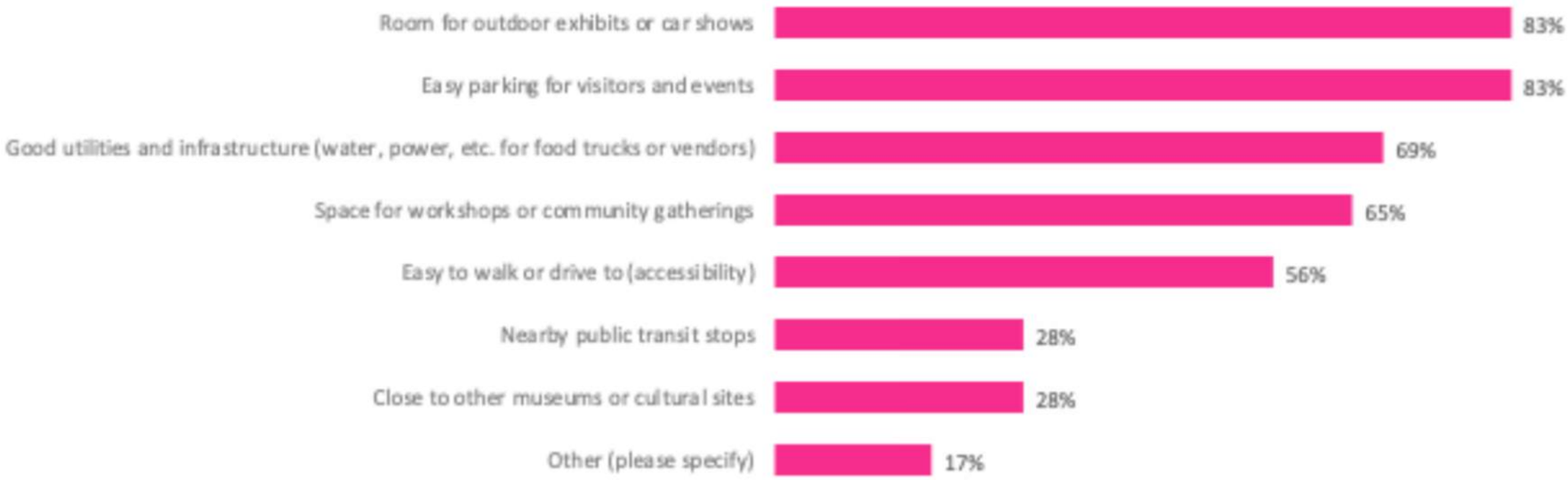
Q7; n=144

LOWRIDER MUSEUM PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

The highest museum planning and development priorities are having space for outdoor exhibits or car shows and easy parking for visitors and events, each cited by 83% of respondents. Strong importance was also placed on adequate utilities and infrastructure (69%) and space for workshops or community gatherings (65%).

Accessibility is a key interest and issue, with more than half of respondents (56%) expressing interest in a site that is easy to walk or drive to. In contrast, fewer respondents prioritized proximity to public transit stops (28%) or being close to other museums or cultural sites (28%). A smaller share (17%) identified other site-related considerations, including mentions of a highly visible, centrally located site—especially along Riverside Drive or Main Street—strongly tied to Española's identity as the lowrider capital, with sufficient parking and infrastructure to support large car shows and community events.)

When thinking about where the Lowrider Museum should be located, which features are most important to you? Select all that apply.



Q8; n=144

LOWRIDER MUSEUM PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Respondents submitted open-ended feedback on who should be consulted during the planning and development process. A total of 61 responses from 54 respondents were collected and categorized as follows.

Who do you think should be consulted in the planning and development of this museum?

Car Clubs (31%): Car clubs in the Espanola, Chimayo and surrounding areas were mentioned, including: Lowrider Association; Old Old School; The Younger Lowriders; Los Guys Car Club; New Mexico Car Club; New Mexico Lowrider Association; Ballers Choice Car Club in Albuquerque; Española Lowrider Phenomena, Family Pride Car Club; Taking Over Car Club, Cholowz Car Club, Viejitos Car Club, Good Times Car Club; and OG Veterans Car Club

General Community & Local Families (34%): Respondents mentioned that there are many local individuals and families that are part of / interested in northern New Mexico culture. These respondents noted the importance of making sure all car owners are given the opportunity to be engaged to capture an expanded view. One specifically elaborated that in the past, many of the same few car owners have been displayed and suggested researching the individuals that were locally involved in the creation of the culture.

Experts from the Lowrider and Cultural Communities (34%): Many survey participants mentioned that there is a vast amount of knowledge in the community, including lowrider builders, leaders, and experts in the field of art and culture, design of public spaces etc. A list of specific names is included on the page to follow.

A longer list of with specific names of key community member and individual experts in the community and potential partners has been started and will continue being developed in future phases.

Q9; n=54

OTHER THOUGHTS / IDEAS

37 people provided other thoughts and ideas in an open-ended format.

Survey feedback indicates strong support for a Lowrider Museum as a community building asset and a way to elevate Española's profile as a lowrider destination. Respondents noted its potential to connect to the broader automotive culture and attract local, regional, and national visitors, while emphasizing the importance of sustainable planning and funding.

Support for a carefully planned and funded Lowrider Museum as a valuable addition to the community

> *"It would be great to have positive things to feature in our community. It is a beautiful place with a beautiful unique culture that should be studied and appreciated."*

> *"The Museum needs to be of top Museum Quality similar to the outstanding Museums in Santa Fe to give the cars and exhibits the respect they deserve, also there needs to be funding to support staffing and programming so the curation and exhibits can be impressive and not reliant solely on volunteers."*

> *"This would be great for the culture of the community."*

> *"I think community needs to be a driving factor for the culture of the museum. The project ought to be a museum for the town of Española and a museum for the state of New Mexico. It's important that this culture is taken seriously and not just displayed with tropes and stereotypes. It should show a genuine idea of the very real and genuine culture of the people of northern NM, and the community that exists therein."*

> *"I believe this could bring revenue to our community and bring our culture value."*

Q10; n=37

OTHER THOUGHTS / IDEAS (CONT.)

An opportunity to showcase Espanola as the Lowrider Capital and engage visitors from the community, the southwest, and beyond.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase Espanola, the Lowrider Capital of the World!”

“We (Española) deserve a Lowrider Museum to uplift and show our rich culture.”

“Be a good attraction one of a kind, many who have low riders could exchange cars by clubs in and out of the museum.”

“This museum would be a boon for Espanola and would show tremendous support and respect of this art and culture.”

“I am a newcomer to Albuquerque from Phoenix and am excited about this museum! It would bring tourists and visitors from all around the Southwest and nationally. A great museum and attraction for Espanola and northern New Mexico.”

Connecting Lowriders to the broader automobile/riding culture

“For me, Espanola was known for the cruising on Fridays and Saturdays. There didn't need to be an event or an invitation. There is a big divide between the car culture. I would suggest looking into featuring other styles of vehicles not just lowriders. We have so many beautiful vehicles (classics, 4x4's, trucks, muscle cars, etc.) in the Valley and they are being left out.”

“Temporary exhibits featuring local artists, lowrider vehicles, bicycles built by the local youth, model car displays, custom hot wheels etc.”

“I believe an auto museum within the City of Espanola would be a great addition to display the many vintage automobiles many of the local communities would come to gather.”

Q10; n=37

APPENDIX III. KEY INSIGHTS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEADERS



Methodology

The consulting team at AK Cultural Planning conducted interviews with 12 regional and national leaders. The goals of these conversations were to better understand the regional context and potential programming opportunities and challenges for a new Lowrider Museum in Española.

This section summarizes insights by theme based on conversations with:

Jadira Gurule, Head Curator and Program Manager, National Hispanic Cultural Center., Albuquerque

Shani Harvie, Director, Creative Industries Division, New Mexico Economic Development Department

Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez, Executive Director, MACLA, San Jose,

Dr. Lisa Yun Lee, Executive Director, National Public Housing Museum, Chicago

Phil MacDougall, Executive Director, The National Automobile Museum, Reno

Danyelle Means, Executive Director, Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe

Arlen Nelson, Coordinator, Creative Industries Division, New Mexico Economic Development Department

Patricia Perea, Director of Education and Outreach, Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe

ShaVolla Rodriguez, Curator, California Automobile Museum, Sacramento

Shana Sasser, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Tourism

Gabriela Silva, Executive Director at Northern New Mexico Regional Art Center, Española

Michele Y. Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Museum of Pop Culture, Seattle

Stephen (Steve) Velasquez, Curator, Division of Home and Community Life, Smithsonian - National Museum of American History, Washington, DC

1. Creating a Place of Belonging and Recognition

Interviewees described traditional museums as powerful but often unwelcoming and their displays too static. They pointed out that relevance, accessibility, and a sense of welcome are not guaranteed, especially for communities that have been left out in the past.

Exhibition design decisions at the Lowrider Museum are seen as critical: they must meet the challenge of conveying the dynamism and vitality of lowrider culture without reducing its history and more traditional aspects to static displays. An interviewee emphasized display rotations as key to sustaining the interest of local visitors.

Interviewees responded enthusiastically when discussing “building” or “creating” as a notion that could be infused across exhibitions and learning. Furthermore, and interviewee suggested extending this notion into building community.

Informal spaces, interactive elements, hands-on activities for all ages, family days, and celebratory experiences were also seen as effective ways to build comfort and participation.

Interviewees expressed that hands-on activities work best when adults and youth collaborate, team-building between generations strengthens bonds.

“ Many people think, unless they grew up with it, museums may not be for them.” —National Museum Leader

“We don’t have a lot of museums that are by, for, and about the community.” —Regional Museum Leader

“How can the museum present these objects and talk about the history, the culture, and the community without making it into something dead and unappealing” —National Curator

“dig into what is that core of building something physical, that is also building community at the same time, and building healing, and building coming together.” —Regional Curator

“spaces where people can just chill, where people can just hangout and meet people, a space that it's not curated a ton but just feels welcoming for people to sit and talk.” —National Museum Leader

“know who your visitors are and show them you are constantly changing. Don’t be be naïve thinking a long exhibition can sustain the attention of the locals.” —National Museum Leader

“From strollers to walkers… make families feel welcome. Make family days fun and obviously: free” — National Museum Leader

2. Lowrider Culture is Collective and Community-Centered

Interviewees described lowrider culture not as an individual artistic or technical pursuit, but as a vibrant social system built on relationships, shared labor, and intergenerational memory.

When thinking about meaningful content to present at the museum, interviewees emphasized the importance of highlighting and reflecting the participative and collective nature of lowrider culture – family involvement, neighborhood cruising, shared histories, and mutual recognition.

Leaders of other community-centered organizations offered advice based on their experience, including:

- Prioritize youth and intergenerational programming to sustain culture, skills, and community connection.
- Making families welcome is critical; music and food are essential
- Focus on education first, attracting families will help build local audiences, then regional and tourist audiences will follow
- Offer space for car clubs and other community groups to gather
- Be responsive to community needs, be a resource, and serve as a connector with partners that can help with other resources

"That connection to family, landscape, religion, and community is really more the heart of it than the paint job, or who did it. It takes a lot of people, not just the builder. Yes, the builder and the car are important, but there's a whole community behind it." —National curator

"These cars don't just represent Craftsmanship. They represent identity, culture, 'la cultura es lo mas importante', it is the heart of the community." —Local cultural center leader

"For public events that are larger scale, we bring in other community resources, a lot of community partners, especially in the social services, or even local schools and education." — National museum leader

"When something happens in the community, are you seen as a resource? that's a really critical way to measure impact" — National cultural center leader

"Use the space you have, make sure you make the museum a focal point for all car clubs, we donate our space for them to meet and have spent time building close personal relationships" —National museum leader

"I wish I had focused on the education program and its spaces first, if we had done that, we would have brought families and would have built audiences faster" —National museum leader

3. A Complex Culture that Must be Contextualized

Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that lowrider culture has been shaped regionally by distinct historical conditions, including experiences of migration, and resistance to dominant cultural narratives, as well as its relationship with broader American car culture.

Some interviewees noted that, as a culture that originated and, at some levels, remains outside the mainstream, it offers power and authenticity in its complexity, yet can also generate misunderstandings.

It is essential for the Museum to contextualize lowrider culture historically, socially, and politically so it is not treated as novelty, spectacle, or decontextualized art.

Furthermore, Interviewees consistently emphasized that while this culture has national and international reach, meaning is grounded locally. Regional histories, landscapes, and social dynamics shape distinct expressions; comparisons across places are valuable only when local specificity is preserved.

"The content needs to be able to traverse the complexity of the feelings and the history, for both a viewer that's incredibly knowledgeable – because they're from the community and building it themselves. And also, people who do not know what they're walking into and are learning about it for the first time" —Regional Curator

"It would be important to contextualize, show the ways that this has become both a model of resistance and affirmation for these communities. Cars become a status symbol not based on price but based on the amount of time you can put into it. It's not just a pretty car, it's a political statement." —Regional Museum Leader

"Don't forget, these cars came out of a very specific sort of racial violence against Mexicans and Chicanos." —National Curator

"There is a line. You are showing all the skills, showing all the creations, attracting also visitors from outside to get relevance and get the knowledge out there but need to be careful not to step on the line where it gets exoticized." —National Curator

4. Voice, Authority, and Representation

A majority of interviewees were concerned about authority and representation:

Gender and Native participation were highlighted as often overlooked but essential.

Representation was discussed not only in terms of who is included in exhibitions and programs, but also in terms of who has decision-making power in curatorial work and interpretation.

Interviewees, particularly those who have worked directly with the Lowrider community in the past, advised:

- Be sensitive to internal debates within lowrider communities about authenticity and authority
- Avoid taking sides in contested histories, recognize diversity within communities, and avoid singular narratives
- Ensure that interpretation, exhibitions, and programs are shaped by people who are part of the culture being represented and that they are treated as experts rather than subjects.
- Empower local experts and ground curatorial practice in community expertise: center community voices and lived experience in interpretation

"The issue is: Who speaks for the lowrider community? Who is more authentic? Who's, who's right and who's wrong? Who did what, and when?" —National Curator

"The individual narrative truths are really important, but sometimes people actually say things that aren't true. But their lived experience needed to be validated. Once you gather all those stories, there's not one homogeneous story, if you're telling the truth there's going to be, a manifold that comes out" —National Museum Leader

" It is important to this particular museum, to make sure that people who are of the community are really creating the foundation for that knowledge base" —National Curator

"Española is surrounded by native pueblos that have also participated in cars and in lowrider art. It is important to rebalance this idea of lowriders being an exclusively Chicano art form, communities bled into each other very deeply here" — Regional Museum leader

"displaying cars that were built by women, because is such a male dominated industry, it feels important when you bring women of color into that space."—National Curator

5. Workforce Development Through Cultural Practice

Workforce development is seen as a valuable opportunity by most interviewees, one that is aligned with how skills – technical, artistic, and social – have been passed down trough generations in Lowrider culture.

The importance of skill transmission rooted in cultural knowledge was emphasized by some.

Leaders with experience or knowledge about youth-focused workforce development programs described them as transformative, especially when programs are open to multiple pathways.

They also shared how institutions are now recognizing the need to start at earlier ages (middle school rather than high school) for better outcomes.

Advice from these leaders included:

- Think A-Z to support participants, preparing them towards a career in trades and/or education pathways
- Make it a fun environment and prioritize personal connection, nurtured by caring qualified mentors
- Starting recruiting in 7th or 8th grade
- Keep older teens motivated by providing compensation (otherwise they may be pulled off-track because of their family's financial pressures)

"We teach them not just the skills, and how to use the tools, they also learn about the history of how everything came about." — Regional cultural center leader

"College, career, and even trade readiness… realizing there's various pathways." — Regional curator

"t's really about a mix of using technology, building critical thinking, working on college applications and/or preparing them for a job interview"—National museum leader

"the best advice for running a youth workforce development program is to get amazing adult mentors who really care and are there to support the youth development." —National museum leader

"You can also train them to be educators, curators, or arts administrators" —National museum leader

"With a few exceptions, unless high school students just moved to the area, they already have their interests defined. We find it's better to start in middle school. The more time we have with them, we see better results." —National cultural center leader

6. Partnerships Are Essential

Building diverse community and institutional partnerships is essential to strengthen programs: Collaborations with community groups, schools, community colleges, universities, and corporations expand capacity.

Community participation via project consultation and/or an advisory board is also seen as key to the success of the museum's exhibitions and programs.

Some interviewees shared their experience with partnerships and advised to partner earlier on rather than building everything internally; they explained that organizations benefit from leveraging existing programs.

Private sector collaborations, especially in emerging technologies, were described as opportunities that offer new directions.

Cross-museum collaboration opportunities exist: State museum Leaders expressed a desire to collaborate on exhibitions and programming.

"We realized that there are other groups out there doing some of the work, and that we could and should be pairing with." —National museum leader

"In hindsight, we could have benefited more from partnering than thinking, oh, we're gonna do it all by ourselves." —National Museum Leader

"this museum would need to have and advisory board, to have the experts in, who've been lowriders for their entire life. You need that group to really give you feedback to stay in the right path." —Regional museum leader

"Private industry partnerships in EV technology and initiatives like the Sacramento EV Lowrider Conversion Project as model show great potential" —National museum leader

"If I had a Lowrider Museum that was great, I would want immediately to do some sort of cross exhibition, cross-programming, I would want to collaborate" —Regional Museum Leader

V. REFERENCES

Photo by **JESSICA ROYBAL**

REFERENCES

Albuquerque Journal. "'Flight Through Time' Features Lowrider-Inspired Airplanes." Albuquerque Journal. *https://www.abqjournal.com/lifestyle/article_836d1302-e023-11ef-83bc-af0fb2c648d7.html*

Alta Journal. "'Bosque,' a 1964 Buick Riviera." *https://www.altaonline.com/culture/art/a65875713/rose-b-simpson-art-cars-de-young-museum/*

American Archive of Public Broadcasting. "¡Colores!; 2222; Low Riders; Interviews; Eppie Martinez; Levi Romero Poem." *https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-3aa3cf76dee*

Bob Eckert Photography. Murals in Española, New Mexico and Surrounding Areas in Rio Arriba County. *https://www.bobeckertphotography.com/murals-in-espanola-new-mexico.html*

Chela Media. Defiant History. Directed by Brandon Loren Maxwell. Documentary miniseries. YouTube. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Edca71_95fk*

City of Española Planning & Land Use Department and Integrated Planning & Design. Comprehensive Plan. City of Española, 2017. *https://www.espanolanmusa.org/220/Comprehensive-Plan*

Environmental Protection Agency. "Superfund Site: North Railroad Avenue Plume, Española, NM." 2025. *https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0604299*

Española Lowrider Association. Facebook page. *https://www.facebook.com/lowriderNM/*

Española Lowrider Association. Facebook post. *https://www.facebook.com/share/15pNH93dck/?mibextid=wwXIfr*

Española Lowrider Museum. Facebook page. *https://www.facebook.com/espanolalowridermuseum/*

Española Lowrider Museum. Instagram page. *https://www.instagram.com/espanolalowridermuseum/*

Herrera, Spencer R., and Levi Romero. Sagrado: A Photopoetics Across the Chicano Homeland. Photographs by Robert Kaiser. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013.

Huelsmann, Kevin. "The Villages of Española." Rio Grande Sun, 2010. *https://www.riograndesun.com/northern_briefs/the-villages-of-espanola/article_1b93a265-26e5-5c8c-a329-93f3836eecb9.html*

KCRA News. Lowrider Legacy: A History of Resistance on Wheels. YouTube video. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf_oDXZrTJM*

KRQE. "Bill Would Fund Study Looking at Bringing Lowrider Museum to Española." *https://www.krqe.com/news/politics-government/legislature/bill-would-fund-study-looking-at-bringing-lowrider-museum-to-espanola/*

KRQE. "Grant to Help Fund Creation of Española Lowrider Museum." *https://www.krqe.com/news/new-mexico/grant-to-help-fund-creation-of-espanola-lowrider-museum/*

Levin, Jennifer. "Faith, Culture, and Lowriding." New Mexico Magazine, December 10, 2025.

Los Alamos Daily Post. "Española Bond House Museum Hosts Lowrider Culture Exhibit." https://ladailypost.com/espanola-bond-house-museum-hosts-lowrider-culture-exhibit/

Maxwell, Brandon Loren. American Homeboy. Documentary film.

Mora, G. Cristina. Making Hispanics: How Activists, Bureaucrats, and the Media Constructed a New American. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nationales Automuseum. "One Year of the Nationales Automuseum." *https://www.nationalesautomuseum.de/en/one-year-of-the-nationales-automuseum/*

New Mexico Legislature. House Bill 239. 2025 Regular Session. *https://www.nmlegis.gov/Legislation/Legislation?chamber=H&legtype=B&legno=239&year=25*

New Mexico Legislature. House Bill 239. PDF. 2025 Regular Session. *https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/25%20Regular/bills/house/HB0239.pdf*

Octane. "Inside the Nationales Automuseum – The Loh Collection." Octane.

Penland, Paige. Lowrider: History, Pride, Culture. St. Paul, MN: Motorbooks International.

Rhode Island School of Design. "Rose B. Simpson 2025 Commencement Speech." YouTube video. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZO0YvH-P0c*

Rio Grande Sun News Service. "Bill Could Bring Lowrider Museum to Española." Rio Grande Sun, March 7, 2025. *https://www.riograndesun.com/news/bill-could-bring-lowrider-museum-to-espa-ola/article_9a3dbd96-fb69-11ef-a826-c780397826a0.html*

Santa Fe New Mexican. "Lawmakers Consider First Step in Establishing Española Lowrider Museum." *https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/legislature/lawmakers-consider-first-step-in-establishing-espa-ola-lowrider-museum/article_5996c4fa-ed85-11ef-a35e-1b18ad547648.html*

Simon, Yara. "Latino, Hispanic, Latinx, Chicano: The History Behind the Terms." History.com, 2020. *https://www.history.com/articles/hispanic-latino-latinx-chicano-background*

Streetlow Magazine TV. "History of Lowrider Magazine." Lowrider Podcast. YouTube video. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMhsep5AtMY*

Torres, Jacob. Facebook post on abandoned buildings and disrepair along Main Street and Riverside in Española. December 16. *https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=26209088235360183&set=pcb.26209128148689525*

Travelsquire. "Low and Slow in Santa Fe: Last Call." *https://travelsquire.com/low-and-slow-in-santa-fe-last-call/*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We offer our deepest thanks to all who shared their time, knowledge, memories, and hopes with us throughout this study. This feasibility study was shaped by the generosity of lowrider builders, car club members, artists, educators, residents, cultural workers, museum leaders, and public partners who spoke with honesty and care about what lowrider culture means in Española and Northern New Mexico. These conversations reminded us that lowriding is not only an art of cars, but an expression of family, place, ingenuity, identity, collective memory, craftsmanship, and a deep sense of pride in place. We are grateful to everyone who welcomed us into dialogue and helped imagine a future museum grounded in community—one that honors the past, reflects the present, and creates space for future generations to gather, learn, and celebrate.

***Mil gracias* to our interview subjects, the more than 150 people who came to our community meeting, and the 144 anonymous voices who responded to our community survey**; we extend special thanks to Don Usner, Alejandro Lopez, Patricia Trujillo, Rose B. Simpson, Matt Miller, Bobby Chacon, Jesse Littlebird, Max Baptiste, Joe Romero, Zelda M. Jaramillo, Jacob Torres, Joan and Arthur "LowLow" Medina, Eppie Martinez, Dominique Rodriguez, Valerie Chavez, Savannah Rodriguez, Dr. Ana Malinalli Gutierrez Sisneros, Vicente Griego, Enrique Lamadrid, Dr. Lisa Yun Lee, Stephen Velasquez, Phil MacDougall, Michele Y. Smith, Jadira Gurule, Danyelle Means, Patricia Perea, Shani Harvie, Shana Sasser, Gabriela Silva, ShaVolla Rodriguez, Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez, Lauren Reichelt, and the people of Española.