

OPINION: Albuquerque needs a 'Five to Thrive' strategy

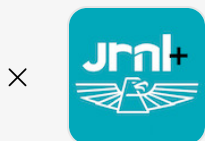
Emily Howard | Mar 22, 2026 | 3 mins to read



Challenge accepted, Mayor Keller. As the executive director of the Economic Forum of Albuquerque, I, along with our board of directors, heard your request to align the business community with your office around key issues that will move Albuquerque's economy forward.

At a recent Economic Forum program, Mayor Tim Keller encouraged us to develop an Albuquerque strategic plan to present to New Mexico's gubernatorial candidates. To build a city where everyone prospers, we must create an environment where all types of businesses can succeed. It's time to embrace a fundamental truth: When business thrives, the economy thrives, and the people of Albuquerque thrive.

Based on this premise, the Economic Forum is championing a focused agenda aligned with the city of Albuquerque that is called the "Five to Thrive." We believe that if we focus on implementing these five initiatives over the long term, real change and growth will happen:



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Public safety technology and civilian involvement.

Affordable and transitional housing.

Tax and regulation reform.

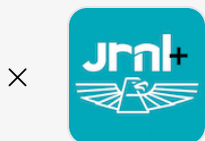
Downtown revitalization.

Completing the Albuquerque Rail Trail.

Successful strategic plans require a narrow focus and a tenacious approach. A good strategy involves choosing what to do and — equally important — what not to do. This is why we will focus on these five things until we see real progress.

The mandate for this focus comes from the people. Last summer, the Economic Forum asked a simple question: What do you want for our economy? The answer from residents and leaders alike was loud and clear: You want growth. You want vitality. You value our local businesses. And you want the business community to lead the way in making Albuquerque a better place for everyone.

The time to align and act is now. We currently have positive economic momentum due to an influx of quantum and advanced manufacturing companies interested in our community. By making Albuquerque more business-friendly, we will become more competitive and desirable than our peer cities in the Southwest. Our state Legislature has also passed key improvements to public education and health care. Most importantly, we will have a new governor in less than a year who should welcome an aligned approach to prosperity.



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Now that we have our list of issues, we will work to coordinate with Keller to take this strategic action plan to the gubernatorial candidates. When Albuquerque can secure support at the state level, we can access the necessary capital to bring the “Five to Thrive” to fruition. As the mayor pointed out, there is plenty of money in state reserves to help fund these initiatives. He believes that with the business community’s unified support, the “ask” for these dollars will be better received and more likely to be secured. Furthermore, we aren’t just advocating for investment in Albuquerque; we hope state reserves can also be used to invest in other New Mexico municipalities so that every community in our state reaps the benefits of this economic momentum.

We realize that the “Five to Thrive” presents complex challenges. However, if the Albuquerque business community and the Mayor’s Office come together over the long haul, we will make a difference. By creating a more business-friendly environment, we will realize economic growth that leads to better jobs, higher wages and an improved quality of life for all our residents.

Emily K. Howard is the executive director of the Economic Forum of Albuquerque; a nonpartisan organization of business and community leaders committed to advancing Albuquerque’s economy.

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