

New Mexico School for the Arts closes deal to buy Sanbusco

By Bruce Krasnow

The New Mexican | Posted: Wednesday, September 23, 2015 11:10 pm

A Santa Fe-based charter high school for visual and performing arts students from across the state has completed its purchase of the Sanbusco Market Center and expects to eventually move its academic and arts programs to the complex near the Railyard.

Students and staff at the state-chartered New Mexico School for the Arts and small-business owners at the upscale retail center were notified of the transaction Wednesday. The 88,000-square-foot complex had gone into foreclosure and was the focus of an online auction last month. The NMSA-Art Institute, the school's foundation, closed on the purchase Tuesday, Riis Gonzales, the foundation's director, said in a statement.

Gonzales said the school has a lot of planning, permitting procedures and fundraising to complete before Sanbusco can be converted into a high school campus.

Meanwhile, the complex remains open to shoppers and diners. The center is home to 18 stores and restaurants — some that have been at Sanbusco for more than two decades and others, like the bourbon bar Radish & Rye, that have recently opened.

Businesses are expected to stay at Sanbusco through the holiday shopping season, and the foundation has promised to work closely with business owners as it phases in the school's occupancy.

"We will definitely be open for the holiday season," said Neal Frank, the owner of Santa Fe Pens, a 19-



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Billy Richards, front left, from Rio Rancho, Melba Crump, center left, Eddie Crump, back left, from Austin, TX, Cindy Kenselman, front right, from Austin, and Carolyn Richards, back right, regroup at the Sanbusco Market Center on Wednesday, September 23, 2015, while visiting Santa Fe. The New Mexico School for the Arts has completed its purchase of Sanbusco Market Center and expects to eventually move its academic and arts programs to the complex in the Santa Fe Railyard. Both students at the high-school and merchants at the commercial center were notified of the transaction Wednesday. The 88,000-square-foot center on 5.8 acres had gone into foreclosure and was the focus of an online auction last month. Luis Sanchez Saturno/The New Mexican

year-old boutique shop at Sanbusco that specializes in high-end pens. “We will be here for gift-giving needs. There’s no way anyone can move before the holidays.”

Many businesses at the center have been on a month-to-month lease, as the previous property owners anticipated a sale. Other businesses have commitments that will require negotiations with the charter school.

“We have a 20-year lease and aren’t planning on going anywhere anytime soon,” said Evan Schultz, a manager of Pranzo Italian Grill, 540 Montezuma Ave., which has been in business for 27 years.

He said the new Sanbusco owners came to introduce themselves to the restaurant’s owner earlier Wednesday. “It’s my understanding the new owners want us here, and our hope is the students and the people working on the school will come over and enjoy our food.”

Other merchants at the center said Santa Fe residents should be concerned about the potential demise of the Railyard district, noting that the parking area around Sanbusco is one big reason people still come to the area. If the school closes off that access to the Railyard, they said, that would stifle more commercial energy in the district.

Santa Fe businessman Joe Schepps, who developed Sanbusco, still owns a parking lot across from the main entrance that he leases to the merchants.

In a statement released by the New Mexico School for the Arts, Santa Clara Pueblo artist Rose Simpson, who serves on the school’s board, said the Sanbusco location means the school “is now poised to become an integral part of the region’s art community. This location will ensure that our creative students, rather than seeming to be cloistered, are out and about establishing ties with the local community and expressing their amazing talents.”

Ned Bennett, who chairs the NMSA-Art Institute board and owns Zane Bennett Gallery near the Railyard with his wife, Sandy Zane, said the Sanbusco acquisition culminates “years of searching for a suitable home for NMSA. We know we have made the right choice not just for the next few years but for NMSA’s long-term future.”

The charter school opened in 2010 with 138 students at the old Cathedral School on East Alameda Street at Paseo de Peralta but rents other spaces for rehearsals, performances and dormitories for students from other parts of the state. It now has 215 students. The school’s state-held charter allows it to have up to 300 students, but its current location is too small to allow that growth. At Sanbusco, a property with several structures on 5.8 acres, the school will have space for expansion.

The complex also sits close to the Santa Fe Depot station for the New Mexico Rail Runner commuter train. Proximity to a train stop has always been appealing to the arts school, which has students who commute from Rio Rancho and Albuquerque — the school’s bell schedule has even been adjusted to meet the Rail Runner schedule.

Schepps developed Sanbusco after buying the former warehouse complex in 1984 when it was on the verge of being condemned. He originally hoped that after a redevelopment project, Sanbusco would become like a “second Plaza,” with a lot of foot traffic and residential space on the upper level. He said there were some good years at the center, but that vision was never realized — and when the Borders bookstore chain declared bankruptcy in 2011, that was the beginning of the end. Sanbusco’s largest retail space had been developed for a Borders site, and the space has stood empty since the store closed.

Recently, another anchor tenant, Cost Plus World Market, announced plans to move across town to the Santa Fe Place mall.

But smaller merchants said the Sanbusco Market Center has been a real community for them.

In an article last month about the possible sale, Gordon Lawrie, owner of Eidos Contemporary Jewelry, said the business owners in the complex know each other, and many have been there for 15 to 20 years. “We’re all friends,” he added. “This is a community.”

There was no group meeting with business owners Wednesday, but New Mexico School for the Arts was scheduling one-on-one sessions with businesses to discuss accommodations.

“Santa Fe is a small community with many close relationships,” said David Ater, chairman of the school’s building committee. “We aim to conduct ourselves in a way that reflects our goals, while respectfully building positive relationships with the current tenants and neighbors.”

Despite rumors — and an article in *The New Mexican* on Aug. 27 about the possible sale — school officials said they could not discuss the transaction until after closing.

The school did leave an information packet about its mission with merchants on Wednesday. Among the contents: an envelope to donate to NMSA.

Contact Bruce Krasnow at 986-3034 or brucek@sfnewmexican.com.

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Posted: Saturday, October 3, 2015 7:00 pm

By Joe Schepps | 2 comments

Like many, I have mourned the loss of Sanbusco, but I am prepared for it to face a new and exciting future as an educational facility. My personal and financial investment in its success was considerable, and I feel its loss as well.

The economic realities are that it could no longer continue its existence as an operating concern. As the former owner, and the driving force behind the

renovation in 1985 of the 1882 Santa Fe Builders Supply Co. (Sanbusco), I am uniquely poised to look back on Sanbusco's legacy and explain my hopes for its future.

Sanbusco struggled for several years and, in a world that had never heard of Amazon.com, we sought major national retailers in the hopes that their presence would help out everyone. Borders Books and Music and Cost Plus World Market became integral to Sanbusco's success, increasing foot traffic exponentially. These were good times for our special stores and their owners. Major economic forces were in effect, however, and retail was changing. Borders, once the country's largest bookseller, bankrupted, disappearing in the new digital age. Cost Plus has had to respond to the market pressures of declining traffic by moving to the south side of town.

It is my deep personal hope that the Sanbusco retailers and restaurants will find continued success in new homes. These fine businesses will be courted by leasing agents, property owners and developers of new projects. The loss of Sanbusco as a retail operation is a very real one, but the reality is it could not be saved. We should not look sadly into the past but instead look forward to the possibilities of the space for the future. One entity has demonstrated their commitment to this vision by buying Sanbusco: The New Mexico School for the Arts-Art Institute (NMSA-AI).

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I am very happy that the NMSA-AI has the vision and commitment to once again reinvent Sanbusco. It is inaccurate and misleading to call the school's students from 33 different New Mexico communities the "select few." As a public/private partnership, the school will give creative and artistically talented students the opportunities their own communities cannot afford.

The Rail Runner link will allow students as far south as Belen to enroll in a world-class arts high school. The size of the facility could eventually allow up to 400 of New Mexico's passionate young artists the opportunity to live up to their potential, and the location of Sanbusco will ensure easy access to numerous downtown performance venues and galleries, the Plaza, the Lensic and more. This will benefit the community and the Railyard more than a half-empty retail destination.

I thank our community for recognizing the wonderful things the tenants and I created, but time changes all things, and Sanbusco is ready for its next reinvention. I can think of no better steward than the NMSA-AI. My hope for Sanbusco is that its legacy will always be one of a vibrant community addition, whether as a lumber building supply company, or a much-loved and missed retail destination, or its future as an exciting urban school for the arts. This school has the support of the state, financial commitment from the private sector and the board of directors who have dedicated years of work to see a statewide high school for the arts find a permanent home in Santa Fe. What more could the community want?

Joe Schepps is president of Inn on the Alameda. This was written with the assistance of Michael Schepps, his son.

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Posted in My view on Saturday, October 3, 2015 7:00 pm.

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2 comments:

Tamara Lichtenstein posted at 3:05 pm on Sun, Oct 4, 2015.



Posts: 11

NMSA is a public school with a private art school component, a hybrid. It receives private support to ensure excellent arts offerings to public school students from all around New Mexico. As such, it serves underprivileged students who might not otherwise be exposed to the specialized instruction and unique culture of an art school. Its vision from the beginning has been to seek and serve those students. In order to attend, students must demonstrate passion, drive and talent, without regard to whether their families have been able to pay for private lessons, materials, instruments--things that many families take for granted in helping their children develop artistically outside of the regular classroom. Our legislators recognize the value of an arts-focused high school in New Mexico, a state with high rates of poverty and small, far-flung communities, where geography and income dramatically affect student access to diverse cultural resources. We follow in the footsteps of other states that have created specialized schools to better serve our students. Santa Fe, as the state's capital and famed as the third largest art market in the country, with numerous museums, galleries, the opera, theater, film, dance, musical and literary offerings, and several small colleges, serves these students well. Since NMSA opened in a former elementary school 5 years ago, it has been seeking a larger facility with transportation links. The search has been very challenging; I am glad it is over. I will continue to shop with Sanbusco's outstanding merchants in their new homes.

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Carol Baumgartel posted at 7:39 am on Sun, Oct 4, 2015.



Posts: 8

Thank you, Joe, for your light and vision...for the past and, now, for the future. Having my granddaughter graduate from NMSA this June was a joyous occasion...and awe inspiring for all whose children were on the stage.

There is nothing further from the truth that this great school is something for the 'privileged' few.... I met dozens of young empassioned artists... visual, musical and performance artists, who would never have had this kind of high caliber instruction anyplace else in this state without paying \$20,000 per year.

The faculty, the staff, and the students deserve the best. They now have that chance with Sanbusco.

Blessings.

Carol Sorensen-Baumgartel

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Sanbusco deal hurts business community, neighborhood

I am mourning the loss of Sanbusco Market Center to the community, and the removal of the 18 locally owned retailers, with the inevitable financial and emotional losses involved ("Done deal: Arts charter school owns Sanbusco," Sept. 24). Santa Fe has long proclaimed a commitment to local businesses, and Sanbusco has been for two decades an example: an attractive mall close to the Plaza.

Now the Santa Fe Railyard will suffer, the small businesses along Montezuma Street will suffer, and a place where so many of us have enjoyed shopping, eating and meeting friends — and bringing our dogs — will be converted to a school serving a select few.

It seems to me that the city might have weighed in on this decision before it became a done deal.

Sallie Bingham

Santa Fe

*Santa Fe New Mexican
letter to the Editor
September 28, 2015*

Sanbusco merchants: Open, 'thriving' and planning for future

Bruce Krasnow | Posted: Monday, September 28, 2015 7:00 pm

Some merchants at Sanbusco Market Center are planning to relocate to DeVargas Center mall, while others are looking to stay near the Santa Fe Railyard.

But whatever happens in the future, business owners want the message to go out that they are still open and will be at Sanbusco through the holiday shopping season. It will likely be the last holiday season of retail at the commercial center, as the New Mexico School for the Arts has purchased the property with plans to relocate its charter high school there.

But that will take months of planning and construction.

"All of our businesses at Sanbusco are thriving and will continue to thrive wherever we end up," said Laurie Wilson the owner of Teca Tu, a Pawsworthy Emporium. "None of us are planning to close. Most of us are embracing the change and looking forward to creating a mini-Sanbusco somewhere else in Santa Fe. Change is inevitable, and how we respond to it makes all the difference."

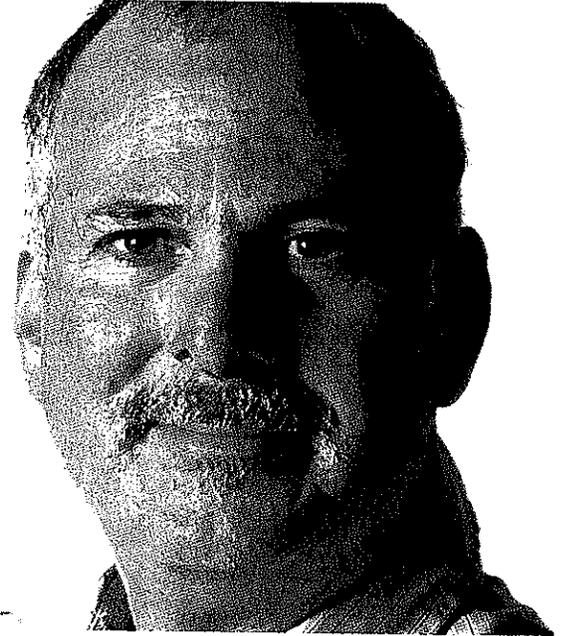
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I reported last week that the rise in the state's unemployment rate is probably related to an expanding labor pool rather than workers losing jobs.

Yes, there is a real employment decline in jobs in the energy sector and the mining and construction work associated with new exploration and drilling. The Bureau of Labor Statistics numbers indicate the state has lost at least 1,000 jobs from a year ago.

But there also has been healthy hiring in other areas, including health care, hospitality, professional services and even government.

So as some optimism returns to the economy, more people who have been on the sidelines might be restarting their job hunt — and that partially explains the increase in the state unemployment rate to 6.7 percent in August, up from 6.4 percent a year ago.



Bruce Krasnow

BRUCE KRASNOW Business Matters

Don't forget: Only those actively looking for work are counted as unemployed.

Thursday's release of first-time unemployment claims might be another reason for optimism.

For the first time since 2007, claims dropped below 900, coming in at 871 for the week ending Sept. 12. It was the first time filings were under 900 since November 2007, aside from a period when the filing system was offline. And the filings have been trending below 2014 all year.

Maybe things have turned in New Mexico, maybe the latest numbers are just aberrations — one, two and three months of data do not necessarily make a trend.

Or as University of New Mexico economist Jeff Mitchell emailed to me last week: "Use extreme caution in reading any of these numbers. These data are Current Employment Surveys (CES) — surveys of households. Sample is small, data is subject to huge and ongoing revisions. The labor force numbers, in particular, can be revised years afterwards."

• • •

Santa Fe business owner Lloyd Abrams has crunched some numbers on direct flights from the Santa Fe Municipal Airport and concludes, "Santa Fe is not in the same league as cities a fraction of our size."

Most of the cities on his list are similar to Santa Fe in that they have a large tourist population, such as Aspen — population 7,000 with eight nonstop destinations from its airport, or Branson, Mo., population 11,000, with nonstop service to six cities from its airport.

Of the airports on the list, Abrams notes that Fort Myers, Fla., has the most. With a population of 66,000, it has nonstop service to a stunning 46 cities. Savannah, Ga., with the same population, has nonstop service to 12 cities.

Now that nonstop service by American Airlines from the Santa Fe airport to Los Angeles International Airport has ended — and no replacement carrier seems interested in the route — there are just two nonstop cities from Santa Fe: Dallas and Denver.

Whether that means Santa Fe is underserved is open for debate. Unlike many other smaller markets, Santa Fe is an hour from an airport that is largely underutilized — the Albuquerque International Sunport — where parking can be found for less than \$5 a day.

And as I tell my friends who fly in from Los Angeles, the driving time from Santa Fe to the Sunport is almost always an hour, not an hour on Sunday afternoons and three hours during a weekday rush hour.

And unlike flying into L.A. or Orlando, Fla., or Chicago, one can stop for pueblo gas on the way home.