



Founders would be proud of city's progress in 2009

By Mayor David Coss

For 400 years, generations of Santa Feans have shaped a unique city.

This is a place deeply steeped in a culture and heritage that still pulses through our streets and informs our way of life. Understanding this history is vital to our future. So, as I reflect on this last year, I'm most struck by how we have built on this heritage.

The year 2009 tested our resilience. Every Santa Fean felt the downturn of the national economy. It has affected our city budget, all local businesses, and every worker. I'm proud that during these tough times we did not have to cut any city jobs and that our unemployment rate — although high — has stayed well below that of the nation and other cities in New Mexico.

The downturn has also caused increases in domestic violence and property crimes. In the new year, we will continue to attack these problems head on, with our police department working with community members on such important things as our Neighborhood Watch programs and other initiatives to make our town safer.

However, even during such a difficult year, we have seen important progress for our local economy. We made it easier to get to and from Santa Fe. We now have daily round-trip flights from Santa Fe to Los Angeles and Dallas. We have the new Rail Runner commuter train, which brought 1.3 million people here in 2009. The Community Convention Center is thriving. It's booked almost every weekend and has brought in internationally renowned shows like SOFA (Exposition of Sculpture Objects and Functional Art), putting us firmly in the same art league as Chicago and New York. Efforts like these help local businesses thrive, generate revenue for the city, and keep Santa Fe

vibrant and alive.

2009 also brought us progress on revitalizing the Santa Fe River. It's wonderful to see the community coming together to address the challenge of restoring a living river. YouthWorks! has been a terrific partner in these efforts. While cleaning up the river, YouthWorks! puts at-risk youth to work and transforms their lives. This is particularly important because we now know that many neighborhood burglaries are being committed by young, often repeat offenders. Programs like YouthWorks! are preventative, positive, and critical to stopping crime and putting young people to work.

Perhaps the progress I am most proud of in 2009 is our effort to save the College of Santa Fe. While some have argued that the city could not afford to buy a college, I believe we could not afford to lose it. The acquisition immediately saved more than 100 jobs. CSF will attract more than 600 more students next year, bringing many more jobs and millions of dollars to Santa Fe by way of house rentals, visitors, and student dollars spent. This is also an important investment in our cultural and creative economy.

Our resilience was also tested through the tragedies of this year. I attended far too many funerals and memorials for young people killed by drunken driving or senseless violence. This is unacceptable, and we're continuing to work on the root causes of violence and substance abuse in Santa Fe.

As we enter 2010, we know that our challenge is to create more good jobs and continue to build a strong economy. We can do that together, just as we always have. I believe that our founders would be proud of the city we have built, as well as the generosity and heart of the people who make it great.

David Coss is mayor of Santa Fe.

