

The Pueblo Chieftain

Pueblo named Colorado's first 'Maker City'

By James Bartolo

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Pueblo has reached a new milestone in branding itself as a city of creatives.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony by the Pueblo Latino Chamber of Commerce and reception on Saturday at TickTock Pueblo on 315 N. Santa Fe Ave., recognized Pueblo as the first Etsy Maker City in the state of Colorado. Other cities receiving the distinction in 2019 included Nashville, Tennessee; Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Phoenix, Arizona; and Columbia, Missouri.

Etsy, a website hosting sellers of handmade and vintage items, partnered with the MasterCard Center for Inclusive Growth to award the Southern Colorado Economic Development District a \$40,000 grant to grow Pueblo's creative community.

"It gives us the resources to help artists, makers, creatives, artisans, and small business manufacturer wannabes to take what they do and turn it into a successful business," said Shelly Dunham of the SCEDD.

The scope of an artist in Pueblo is broadly defined, Dunham said.

"If you are an artisan bread-maker, if you are a photographer, a fine artist, if you are a jewelry maker... a musician, we define it very broadly," Dunham said. "You can't turn around in Pueblo without running into someone who is creative in some area."

"People in Pueblo are resourceful," she said. "They know how to make something from nothing. They know how to build something terrific out of very little resources."

Emily Gradisar, owner of TickTock Pueblo, said her experience with the creative community in Pueblo has been welcoming as artists often inspire one another despite a diverse range of craft and expertise.

“Everybody is focused on making Pueblo better, by whatever metric that is for people,” Gradisar said. “For some folks, that’s economically better; some folks that’s more people living here; for some it’s more places like TickTock that offer things for people to do socially. We’re always focused on just building something better.”

For those wanting to get involved with Pueblo’s larger creative community, Gradisar said, there are plenty of opportunities including Pueblo Makes Meetings every third Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. in Watertower Place, First Friday Art Walks in Downtown Pueblo, activities at public libraries and various art classes held both within and outside of TickTock.

“My grandpa worked at the Steel Mill,” Gradisar said. “I always think about him and my grandmother. A lot of times, Pueblo’s history, people treat it like a millstone around our neck. It’s not; it’s a foundation. It’s a stepping stone of something bigger and better. We can love our history and be proud of it.

“We like things to be hard, but they can be a little easier.”

“We just want to build something a little better for our kids and for the next generation after that,” she said.

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