

Subject: Baca launches second attempt to limit short-term rentals / Out and about: Tenth and Central property is for sale
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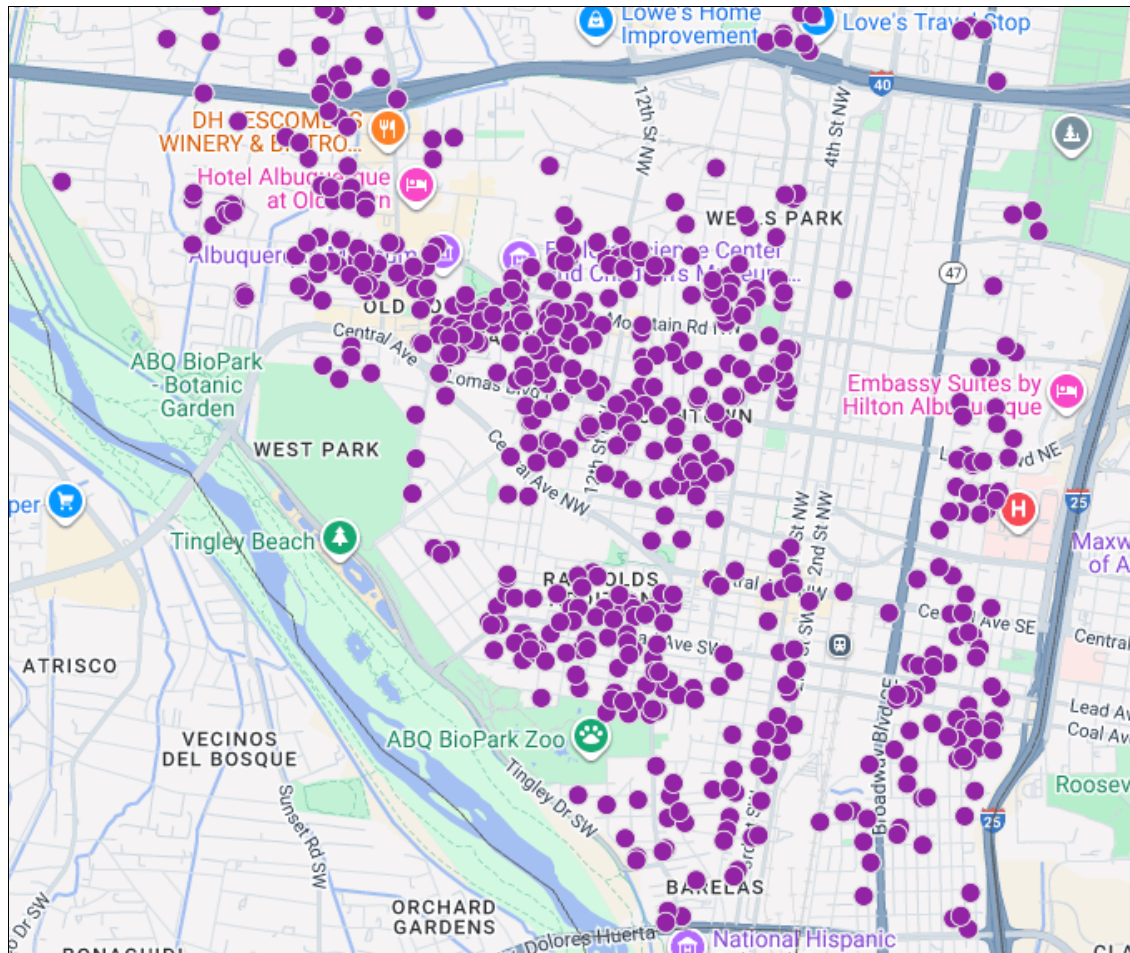


Briefing:

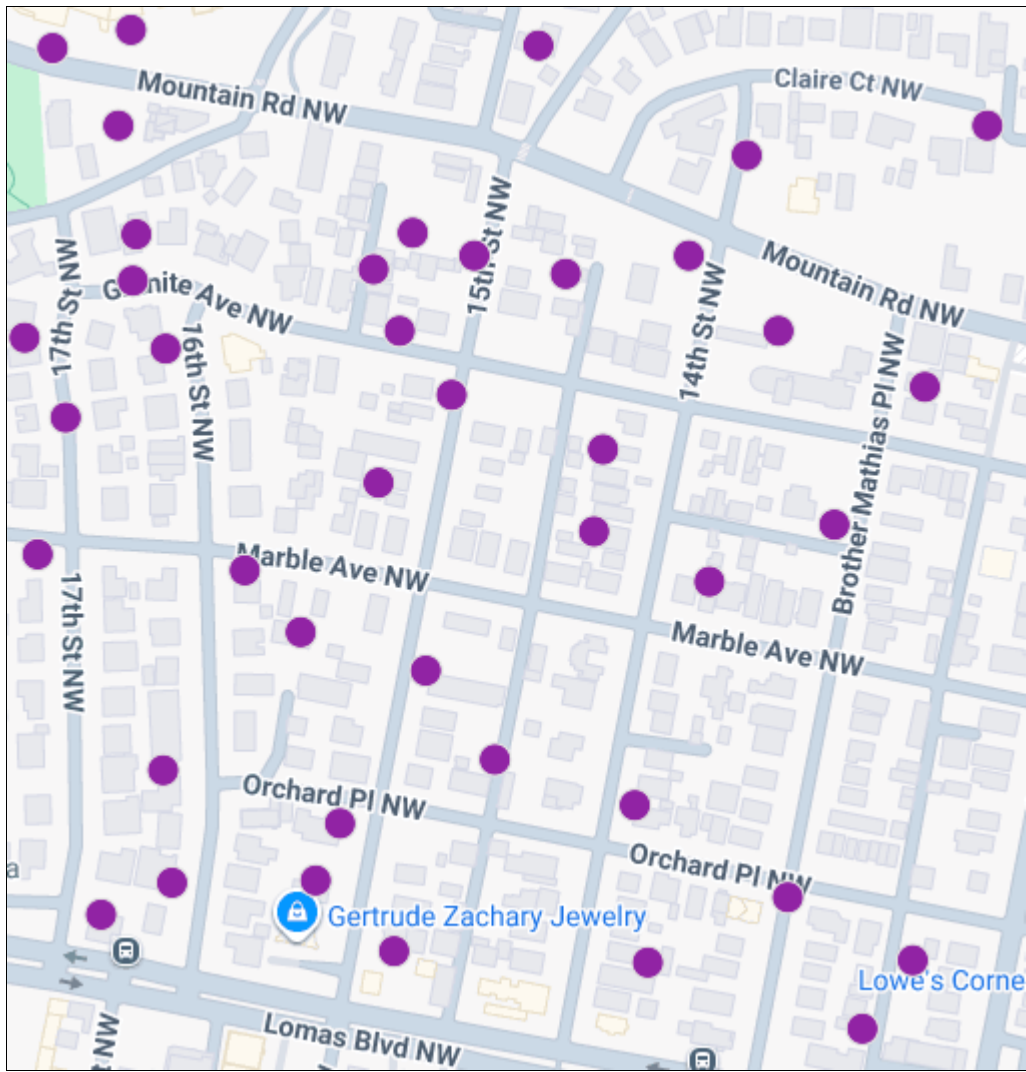
- *Baca launches second attempt to limit short-term rentals*
- *City to booster set: Talk up Downtown*
- *Out and about: Tenth and Central property is for sale / Portland Loo is open for business (really)*

Baca launches second attempt to limit short-term rentals

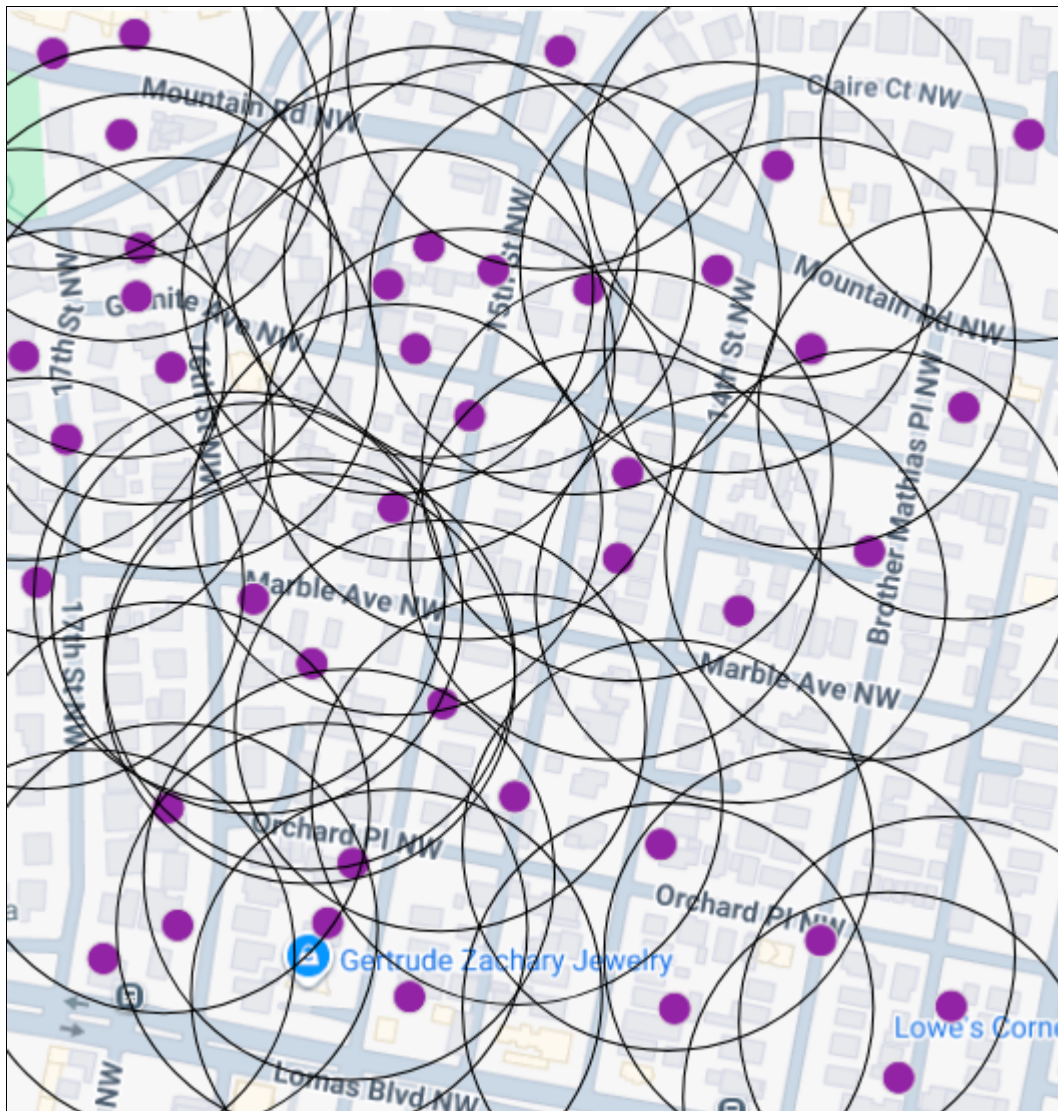
New bill would create a block-long buffer between units, but its odds of success appear to be long



Short-term rentals are particularly concentrated in the UNM/Nob Hill area and in Greater Downtown, as is illustrated on the above map from AirDNA, an analytics firm. There are roughly 2,000 units in the entire city, and nearly 500 of them are in the 87102 and 87104 zip codes.



Here's that same map zoomed into a section of the Downtown Neighborhoods and Sawmill...



...and here is that map with the 330-foot buffers called for in the legislation added. With the caveat that the purple dots represent only the approximate location of a given short-term rental unit and the buffer area is likewise approximate, the effect of the bill nevertheless becomes clear. Existing units (at least those that have bothered to file for a city permit) would be grandfathered in, but in the areas with the highest concentrations of short-term rentals, it would be very difficult to locate another one.

City Councilor Joaquín Baca is again attempting to limit the concentration of short-term rental units across the city, joining forces with two other councilors to resurrect an idea that failed to pass in 2024 and may well come up short again in 2026.

[The legislation](#), which he is sponsoring with fellow progressives Tammy Fiebelkorn and Nichole Rogers, would essentially place a block-long buffer around all permitted short-term rentals, preventing new ones from springing up in those areas (see diagram above). Exceptions would be made for all existing permitted units, plus individual rooms and casitas rented out by owners who live on the property in

question.

The bill is a near carbon copy of [the 2024 effort](#), but it would apply to the entire city rather than just the Greater Downtown and UNM/Nob Hill area, which together are home to an outsized fraction of the city's short-term units.

The arguments for and against have likewise not changed much.

"We still have a housing crunch here in Albuquerque," Baca said. "It's incumbent on us to keep trying."

"These are all predominantly located in our historic neighborhoods and our neighborhoods of people of color," he added in remarks to the council's Finance and Government Operations Committee last week. "These are the areas that are being impacted more than other areas in the city."

But industry representatives are having none of it, arguing that short-term rentals create jobs, help small business owners put food on the table, and support the broader tourism industry.

Interested owners are "going to go register and they're going to find out that there's a neighbor near them that already has a short-term rental and they're going to be excluded from renting their property," said Carl Vidal, a board member of the New Mexico Short-Term Rental Association. "That's just a travesty."

The arguments resonated with a majority of the committee, which voted the measure down 3-2. Baca, who along with Westside Councilor Stephanie Telles voted to advance the measure, said he would bring it back to the full council for another vote, but the math there may not be much friendlier. The 2024 legislation failed on a 6-3 vote, and five of those "no" votes are still on the council, meaning someone will need to have a change of heart for the measure to succeed.

Last week's committee discussion also focused on what Planning Department Director Alan Varela called a "rather scanty" enforcement regime connected to the city's permitting program, which passed into law in 2020 ([DAN, 8/13/20](#)). Some 600 short-term rentals have registered with the city, Varela said, which translates to roughly one-quarter of the units that are listed on Airbnb, VRBO, and other such platforms.

That state of affairs would have implications for any new distance-based limits because unregistered units would not fall under the bill's grandfather clause and could thus be locked out of a permit, even if they had been operating for years.

Whether operators would simply continue to work outside the permitting system, or perhaps rush to get into compliance before the law came into effect (or before someone else buffered the option away) isn't clear.

The fate of such operators, however, isn't keeping Baca up at night. "If they're unregistered, then they're operating illegally at this point. I have no sympathy," he said.

Shortly before he voted against the legislation, Councilor Dan Lewis said that increased enforcement of the existing permitting system was about the only form of new short-term-rental regulation he could support.

Distance requirements like those proposed in Baca's bill are a common method that cities across the country use to regulate short-term rentals, though the exact measurements vary. [Santa Fe uses a more generous 50-foot rule](#), while [Austin mandates a 1,000-foot buffer](#). Other cities are actively working on new rules: Fayetteville, Arkansas's city council passed legislation last month [adding a 100-foot rule](#).

City to the booster set: Talk up Downtown

The city's Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency teamed up with the Urban Land Institute's local chapter last week to put on a kind of broad Downtown update and pep rally, with officials urging the audience to sing the core's praises as a kind of counterweight to the negativity that is routinely piled onto it.

"I really think we're at the cusp of turning a new page on Downtown," MRA Director Terry Brunner told an audience of planners, property owners, city center enthusiasts, and other interested parties gathered in a second-floor conference room at the Hilton Garden Inn (Central and Broadway). "Let's stop picking on Downtown. Let's get behind it. Let's form that glue that sticks these building blocks together."

Brunner ticked through a list of initiatives the city has pursued in recent months and years to bring new life to Downtown, including the [Albuquerque Rail Trail](#), the Downtown 2050 Plan ([DAN, 10/22/25](#)), the restriping of Central for bike lanes ([DAN, 3/11/25](#)), new wayfinding and branding ([DAN, 12/26/25](#)), the tax increment financing district ([DAN, 9/16/25](#)), the business improvement district ([DAN, 11/24/25](#)), and a forthcoming study that attempts to untangle parking ([DAN, 11/18/25](#)).

Brunner added that a deal to bring components of UNM to the core was still in negotiation but that "three deans" are on board with the idea and he expects

programs to begin moving Downtown in the spring or summer. Erica Sánchez Richards, who works in the UNM provost's office as the chief strategy and partnership officer, was in attendance last week and was also spotted recently at a meeting of the Downtown ECHO.

Construction of a new open-air pedestrian passage across the tracks along Central, meanwhile, is proceeding and should finish with the first ramp by May, Department of Municipal Development Director Jennifer Turner said. That by itself will not make it possible to cross to the other side, where construction of the second ramp has not yet begun, but she added that "we're hard at work designing the remainder of the pedestrian bridge."

Near-term work should at least open the door to the installation of the famous electric tumbleweed sculpture, which is set to be placed on a kind of supplementary north-south bridge.

Turner is a fan: "I really view the tumbleweed as the city of Albuquerque's Eiffel Tower," she said.

(Though it has since grown on people, the Eiffel Tower also [stirred up no end of controversy before its installation](#), with one group of artistic and literary luminaries signing a joint statement declaring it "useless and monstrous.")

Other highlights from last week's event included the following:

- On the subject of the parking study, Toole Design planner Kelsey Walker said to expect the document's release "in the next month." She added that the recommendations would include raising prices for on-street parking at the busiest times and lowering prices in garages ([DAN, 11/18/25](#)).
- City Councilor Joaquín Baca said he was working to get a new collection of flowerpots for the core. He also gave an update on the Broadway restriping project, details of which will be in DAN soon.
- Brunner said the city's 2026 agenda would include a "small-business plan" for encouraging development around the rail trail zone.
- He also said that the city would be asking the state legislature to replace the money for the rail trail that the federal government pulled last year ([DAN, 9/12/25](#)).

Out and about



Noticed at Tenth and Central: The property that was once at the center of a project to expand the Downtown Growers' Market ([DAN, 8/26/25](#)) is for sale. A search for an online listing with details, however, turned up nothing.







Noticed at Civic Plaza: DAN has received a few reports in recent weeks that the freshly inaugurated Portland Loo restroom was locked and not "open for business" as promoted by city officials last month. If that was in fact the case, it is no longer. The restroom is open, the water at the handwashing station is running, and the dryer is working.

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