

Studies show Santolina is sustainable

Jeff Garrett / President, Garrett Development Corporation

Santolina, a 13,850-acre master plan in Albuquerque, located along Interstate 40, just 10 minutes from Downtown, offers Bernalillo County a cohesive, well-designed and sustainable opportunity to address growth.

Projections by the Middle Rio Grande Council of Governments and the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research indicate the area's population will increase by 438,522 people and 182,188 jobs by 2040, of which the county will capture over 70 percent of such people and jobs.

While infill may accommodate some of the growth, other options are required to serve the region's citizens and employers as well as maintain livability and economic viability.

Western Albuquerque Land Holdings LLC, the owner of Santolina, reserved 4,031 acres for economic development and employment opportunities, which supports 75,000 on-site jobs. Over 18 months, eight public hearings and two workshops have been conducted by the County Planning Commission, and numerous meetings have been held with county staff, all resulting in a thorough vetting of Santolina.

County staff and the planning commission have each independently concluded that Santolina satisfies and complies with the adopted City/County Comprehensive Plan and the Planned Communities Criteria.

Prior to recommending approval of Santolina, the county Staff and planning commission thoroughly analyzed and considered many critical issues such as: water, no net expense and the jobs-housing balance.

The Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority provides water and sewer service to current and future citizens and employers of the city and county. The authority has stated multiple times it has the available supply and capacity to serve Santolina. In fact, it has indicated it has capacity to serve Santolina as well as additional growth in the region.

The Planned Communities Criteria of "no net expense" requires that new developments generate revenues equal to or greater than expenses to the county. David Taussig and Associates, Inc., a nationally recognized firm specializing in public finance and urban economics, conducted a fiscal impact study to confirm compliance with this requirement. Additionally, the Bernalillo County Economic Development Department retained an independent third party to review the Taussig and Associates study.

Both experts, as well as county staff, agreed Santolina satisfies the "no net expense" requirement.

Lastly, a fiscal study commissioned by critics confirms Santolina complies with the Planned Communities Criteria.

The above reports calculated Santolina will generate an annual surplus of \$9 to \$22 million to the county.

David Taussig and Associates also prepared an economic impact study which concludes Santolina will, at full build out, directly and indirectly create 115,000 jobs, generate \$10.9 billion in recurring economic output and \$18.1 billion in one-time economic benefits.

These studies clearly prove Santolina is a self-sustaining community with considerable positive financial and economic benefits for the entire county and is not a tax burden.

Santolina will also help Bernalillo County and the surrounding communities create more balance in the West Side

jobs-housing ratio.

There are currently 1.39 jobs per house east of the Rio Grande and .56 jobs per house west of the Rio Grande. Due to inadequate entitlements and infrastructure, there are limited locations for job growth on the West Side. The only way to make a meaningful positive impact on the West Side jobs-housing balance, as well as New Mexico's ability to successfully compete with other states in the region, is to work with large landowners that can reserve substantial acreage for employment purposes and also invest in infrastructure.

Santolina's stated objective of two jobs per house, accordingly allocates 4,031 acres for industrial, manufacturing, business parks, town centers and urban center uses. Western Albuquerque Land Holdings will continue to offer these areas to large employers such as Tesla and First Solar as well as others.

The county staff and the county planning commission recommendations for approval are well founded and supported. Santolina is an excellent plan that promotes sustainable smart growth as well as expands economic development and job creation opportunities.

Jeff Garrett is asset manager for Western Albuquerque Land Holdings LLC.