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North Central New Mexico Economic Development District Awarded \$1.3 Million to Purchase and Renovate Permanent Home in Santa Fe

SANTA FE—Yesterday, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo announced that the Department’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) is awarding a \$1.3 million grant to the North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NCNMEDD) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to acquire and renovate an office building for the organization.

Finding a permanent home for NCNMEDD has been long in the making. NCNMEDD was designated as a federal Economic Development District by EDA in 1968. Created through a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) among the counties of Colfax, Los Alamos, Mora, Rio Arriba, San Miguel, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Taos, and the City of Santa Fe, NCNMEDD’s first home was in the military barracks at the College of Santa Fe, where it paid nominal rent for more than forty years. In the last decade, NCNMEDD was housed at the Santa Fe Business Incubator, where it rented office space until late last year.

While acquiring a permanent home for NCNMEDD was a long-term goal, the effort picked up steam in the past few years. After joining NCNMEDD in 2019, Executive Director Monica Abeita built on the past work of Interim Executive Director Thomas Garcia by following up on office space leads. After several disappointing attempts, Abeita found a listing for a historic building at 644 Don Gaspar in October 2022. She researched the property and various options to purchase it, including taking out a bank loan and using the New Mexico Finance Authority’s Public Project Revolving Loan Fund (PPRLF). Abeita then discovered that NCNMEDD’s JPA prohibited NCNMEDD from purchasing and owning real assets.

NCNMEDD Board of Directors President Ernesto J. Salazar credits Abeita for her relentless efforts and for staying the course in lobbying the legislature and working with EDA, the New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, and many local partners. “There was a lot of work to do,” Salazar says. “Each of our member governments had to take the JPA back to their respective boards and have it amended to allow us to purchase and own real assets. When we

discovered that we could not obtain a loan or easily use the PPRLF, we began discussing the purchase with EDA, which encouraged us to apply for a grant.” Salazar credits EDA Austin Regional Office Director Jorge Ayala, Area Director Jessica Falk, and Economic Development Representative Trisha Korbas. “The EDA team, in particular our partner Trisha Korbas, made this happen. EDA helped us achieve this long-time goal for the organization, our members, and the region.”

Senator Roberto J. “Bobby” Gonzales, Senator Leo Jaramillo, Representative Joseph Sanchez, Representative Susan K. Herrera, and Representative Tara Lujan each allocated a portion of their 2023 capital outlay funds to provide a \$320,000 non-federal match for the project. “The capital outlay funding was especially meaningful because of the strong partnership we have with our Legislators in the north central region. Representative Lujan grew up in the Don Gaspar neighborhood and was very excited for this opportunity,” says Abeita.

Senator Leo Jaramillo concurs. “This is a huge investment from the Department of Commerce for northern New Mexico. The NCNMEDD has been key in assisting counties and municipalities in gaining additional funding for major projects in our area. By having their own building, they will be able to provide more services to vital resources to local government,” says Jaramillo.

Abeita says there are many more people to thank at the future ribbon cutting, which will occur after NCNMEDD closes on the property. “High on my list to thank is property owner Daniel J. O’Friel, attorney, who lovingly restored the building and used it as his law office for many years. O’Friel says, “I am pleased to have been able to add to the history of the building. Michael Berardinelli built 644 Don Gaspar Avenue at the turn of the last century. This gem of a building now passes to sterling group of New Mexicans dedicated to the betterment of our community.”

Board President Salazar adds, “The NCNMEDD Board of Directors is especially grateful to our former board presidents Nick Salazar and Jim Trujillo, who are not here to celebrate this achievement. They are the reason NCNMEDD has endured and prospered since its founding in the late 1960s. We hope they are celebrating with us today.”

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