



NEW MEXICO FIRST

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**New Mexican's gather to create questions that will help inform
the City Council approved \$700,000 impact and feasibility assessment
on the proposed Event Center and Hotel Complex.**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, July 17, 2008—Town Hall participants want to know “How will the [proposed event center and hotel complex] benefit all of Albuquerque, [and] what are the larger community, regional and state impacts arising from this project?” They also wanted to know: “Can we have an autonomous, empirical, in-depth feasibility study that includes the cost of public safety, increased public transportation, arts, clean downtown, and enough safety personnel beyond the immediate area...” These questions and others surfaced yesterday, as various stakeholder groups gathered for **Town Hall Albuquerque: a Discussion on the Proposed Event Center and Hotel Complex**.

“Our goal was to bring together all stakeholders and offer them unbiased and balanced information about the pros and cons of such a project so that they could come up with questions that the Assessment Team will consider as they conduct the upcoming feasibility and impact study,” said Heather Balas, President of New Mexico First, “and based on participant feedback, we more than achieved that goal.”

Interested stakeholder groups included: neighborhood associations and other community-focused groups, representatives from the pueblos, small business owners, developers, and environmentalists. Questions generated by participants fell into major themes, including: financing, big picture, transparency (of the process), and process nuts and bolts. In addition to those stated above, other priority questions identified by the group included:

- Are we adequately planning to fully utilize the site with a mix of uses?
- What is the financial benefit of the project to the region, the state, and the city? Will the study define the criteria of success and performance metrics by ensuring it will be profitable for Albuquerque, assure that Albuquerque will have a sustainable, competitive advantage, and that Albuquerque will be in the top ten cities of its size with event centers?
- What is the demand for this project and the anticipated financial impact, both positive and negative, considering both today's and projected economic conditions and their impact on travel patterns?
- How will this project out-compete all the other competing locations that tourists and groups have to choose from? How can this project incorporate Albuquerque regional and cultural characteristics and strengths, like the airport, to increase competitive advantage?
- What is the economic impact if we don't do this project?

The town hall questions will be sent to city officials, project leaders, the assessment team, business owners, and other interested parties. The Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau, who sponsored this town hall, sees this as the first step in an ongoing dialogue between stakeholder groups to determine the best course of action not only for Albuquerque, but for New Mexico as a whole.

About New Mexico First:

*Co-founded by Senators Pete V. Domenici and Jeff Bingaman in 1986, **New Mexico First** is a non-partisan organization dedicated to engaging cities in policy. It is best known for its annual, statewide, deliberative town halls that produce recommendations for state and local leaders.*

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