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# An Albuquerque stadium project advanced last week. This group wants to see more like it.



Image: Denis Tangney Jr

An Albuquerque-based membership organization wants to advocate for what it sees as more "pro-growth" development in the Duke City and throughout central New Mexico.

DENIS TANGNEY JR

By [Jacob Maranda](#) and [Aayush Gupta](#) – Albuquerque Business First  
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When Albuquerque's Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) heard a proposal on April 11 to amend the Balloon Fiesta Park master plan, allowing a large soccer stadium for local team New Mexico United on park grounds, more than 100 people tuned in, far surpassing usual EPC hearing turnout.

Those 100-plus people included many folks from a new group in the state aimed at seeing United's proposed stadium – and many other projects like it – come to fruition across the Duke City and other parts of Central New Mexico.

Called [Generation Elevate New Mexico](#), or GENM, the membership-based organization wants to educate people about supporting what it sees as "pro-growth" development. It plans to do that by notifying members of upcoming public comment opportunities for projects, providing letters of support members can share and engaging members and other stakeholders on social media.

It'll pick projects to support based on the vote of GENM's nine-person leadership committee. There are several factors that go into the organization's project-selection decisions, which include if a project maximizes density, improves walkability and transit, promotes housing growth and improves property values, [among others](#).

Collaboration between project developers and local residents, too, is another important factor in GENM's decision-making process, said Sal Perdomo, one of the organization's founding committee members and the director of acquisitions and development for Titan Development.



Generation Elevate New Mexico's logo.

GENERATION ELEVATE NEW MEXICO

Perdomo said one part of GENM's focus in supporting certain projects is pushing back against NIMBY-ism in New Mexico – an acronym that stands for "not in my backyard" and is typically used to categorize groups that are against certain types of denser, larger developments in local areas.

"A lot of people who might fall in that category complain that we don't have an IKEA here, or 'my kids had to move to Dallas because a lack of opportunity,'" Perdomo said. "What they don't realize is that when they fight projects and they fight growth, you're losing out on that IKEA. You're losing out on tax dollars that are used to pave that road over there. You're losing out on job opportunities for your kids.

"We want New Mexico to be a place where your kids are not leaving because a lack of opportunity," he continued. "The only reason they would leave is they want a different opportunity, not lack of opportunity. It's important that people have enough opportunity here to stay here and grow this state."



Sal Perdomo is director of acquisitions and development for Titan Development and one of the founding committee members of Generation Elevate New Mexico.

JAXSON RAY

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Despite the frequent stereotypes that come with NIMBY-ism, Darrell Dady, neighborhood coordination specialist at the City of Albuquerque, said neighbors are often open to discussions with organizations such as GENM to better understand the full scope of proposed projects.

"[Neighborhood associations] would certainly not be totally opposed to the group you're mentioning," Dady said. "If [there's a project] they feel would work well with their neighborhood, they're not unreachable. But you do need to approach them with care and make sure that [the project] is not too noisy or [creates] too much traffic. I think if it meets those criteria, [the project] doesn't go there."

### **Details on the inaugural project backed by GENM**

The first project GENM picked to support is New Mexico United's planned soccer stadium.

To voice his and GENM's support for the project, Perdomo, part of GENM's founding committee, attended the EPC [special hearing](#) on the stadium proposal on April 11, speaking on behalf of the organization. During that hearing, he pointed to three primary reasons for support, saying the stadium represents a "key investment" in Albuquerque, the fact the project is an infill development and will revitalize what he feels is an underutilized parking lot and its sustainable and environmentally conscious components.

"I can't convey enough how important this project is to the growth of Albuquerque," Perdomo said during the hearing.

Following a detailed 9-hour discussion, EPC commissioners unanimously voted in favor of the proposal to amend the Balloon Fiesta Park master plan to allow for the stadium in a 7-0 vote. Two commissioners were not present.



The proposed New Mexico United stadium will hold between 8,000 to 10,000 fans.

NEW MEXICO UNITED

Although the EPC initially [passed](#) the proposal last November, the Land Use Hearing Officer (LUHO), Steven Chavez, elected to remand the case back to the EPC, citing "improper notice" to nearby neighbors who expressed concerns about heightened traffic, noise pollution, light disturbance and the potential impact of fireworks on local wildlife.

New Mexico United's updated plans attempted to address concerns over traffic, light and noise and presented public support from community members such as Perdomo, Sen. Antonio "Moe" Maestas; D'Val Westphal, executive vice president of policy and programs for the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce; and Howie Kaibel, brand manager at M'tucci's Restaurants.

"We need to build a city where young people want to live in, where people can thrive and create, and build out a beautiful future for our city," Maestas said during public comment. "I think the city and the developers have done an incredible job of trying to mitigate the issues that have been raised."

Dady was unsure whether neighbors were still actively opposing the EPC's verdict.

"[Neighbors] still don't want noisy situations and more traffic than they've got already with the Balloon Fiesta," Dady said. "They deal with it once a year and they really would like to keep [the area] pretty quiet for the most part."

The proposed stadium, which will hold 8,000 to 10,000 fans, is slated to host 17 games each year. Following the EPC's decision, the case will now be sent back to the LUHO for further review. A date for the hearing has yet to be scheduled, Vincent Higgins, City of Albuquerque public information officer, said.

"Once the LUHO makes a recommendation to City Council, the appeal will be heard and voted on at a regular City Council meeting," Higgins said in an email statement to Business First on April 2.

"GENM is encouraged by the EPC's unanimous vote to approve the requests allowing for the United Stadium to be built at Balloon Fiesta Park," Perdomo said in an email statement on behalf of GENM. "Our membership will continue to support the United Stadium at City Council, and look forward to supporting more impactful projects in New Mexico."

### **Background, future of the upstart organization**

GENM has been in the works for about one year, Perdomo said, before it formally launched in mid-March. JT Mitchell, another founding committee member and market research specialist at DXD Capital, said developments that create "economic-base jobs" in the Albuquerque and Central New Mexico community are another preference of the organization.

There's not a preference, however, between in-state versus out-of-state developers.

"Whether it's a local developer or an out-of-state developer, as long as they're engaging with the community appropriately and the project ultimately is going to benefit New Mexico in the way we think it is, that's not a distinction that is important to us," Mitchell said.



JT Mitchell is a market research specialist for DXD Capital and one of the founding committee members of Generation Elevate New Mexico.

JAXSON RAY

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Perdomo said there are two other projects in GENM's "pipeline" currently, although he didn't share details on what those projects are. He said the organization's goal is to support five projects this year.

GENM membership is open to anyone through an application form on [the organization's website](#). It has about 50 members currently, Mitchell said, and has just over 250 followers on LinkedIn.

It's also received a bit of money for operations through private donations but isn't seeking additional funding at the moment. Perdomo declined to disclose who backed GENM but said more fundraising could come down the road as the organization's work expands; organization membership is free.

In addition to Perdomo and Mitchell, GENM's nine-person leadership committee currently includes: Ciaran Lithgow, redevelopment project manager for the Metropolitan Redevelopment Agency; Dante Armand Gonzalez, project engineer at Bradbury Stamm Construction; Frankie Hermosillo, business development association for New Mexico Angels; Kyle Biederwolf, external affairs manager for Comcast; Micah Gray, real estate advisor for NAI SunVista; Omega Delgado, redevelopment project manager for the City of Albuquerque; and Renn Halstead, associate architect at FBT Architects.