

Tech company to build science ghost town in NM

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) -- New Mexico, home to several of the nation's premier scientific, nuclear and military institutions, is planning to take part in an unprecedented science project - a 20-square-mile model of a small U.S. city.

A Washington, D.C.-based technology company announced plans Tuesday to build the state's newest ghost town to test everything from renewable energy innovations to intelligent traffic systems, next-generation wireless networks and smart-grid cyber security systems.

Although no one will live there, the replica city will be modeled after a typical American town of 35,000 people, complete with highways, houses and commercial buildings, old and new.

Pegasus Global Holdings CEO Bob Brumley says the \$200 million project, known as The Center, will be a first of its kind in the U.S., creating a place for scientists at the state's universities, federal labs and military installations to test their innovations for upgrading cities to 21st century green technology and infrastructure in a real world setting.

It will also enable them to rub shoulders with investors, meaning it could ultimately draw enough new businesses to give the state a technology corridor like that in California's Silicon Valley or Virginia's Reston, Brumley said.

"The idea for The Center was born out of our own company's challenges in trying to test new and emerging technologies beyond the confines of a sterile lab environment," said Brumley. "The Center will allow private companies, not for profits, educational institutions and government agencies to test in a unique facility with real world infrastructure, allowing them to better understand the cost and potential limitations of new technologies prior to introduction."

For instance, he said, developers of solar technology would be able to assess exactly how their systems would be delivered and used in one house where the thermostat is set at 78, and another where it's set at 68. The center could also help show how efficient it might be in an old building versus a new one.

Brumley said Pegasus has been working with the state on the project for about 18 months, and has some initial plans already drawn up. It is now working on appointing a public-private advisory board and selecting a final site.

He said it will be developed on state-owned land, either in the Albuquerque-Santa Fe corridor or in the Las Cruces area near the Texas and Mexico borders. The northern part of the state is home to the Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories and an Intel factory. Southern New Mexico has White Sands Missile Range, Fort Bliss and New Mexico Institute of Mining and

Technology.

Brumley indicated he had a site narrowed down but said it will likely be a few months before anything final is announced.

Initially, the project will employ about 350 people, Brumley said. But he estimates it could ultimately create 3,500 new jobs "outside the fence."

"This could give New Mexico a leadership position in the commercialization of federal research," he said. "It will serve as a magnet for investors."

Brumley said the ghost town will make money by charging user and operation and maintenance fees, selling energy to the grid by subleasing some of its state land for the development of office buildings, hotels and restaurants.

Gov. Susana Martinez said the state is committed to working with Brumley.

"I am confident this innovative project would provide a great boost to New Mexico's economy," she said in a statement. "We are pleased to be able to offer the resources, open spaces, and talented workforce required to make this effort a success."

My administration is committed to an ongoing relationship with Pegasus that will allow The Center to thrive and create New Mexico jobs."

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