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**STRATEGICALLY NAVIGATING COVID-19 TO
BUILD A BETTER TOMORROW, GALLUP-STRONG**

This year's "*Economic Development Week*" – held worldwide from May 9th to 15th – is a celebration of the work economic developers conduct to improve local and regional economies and the overall quality of life. Economic developers impact the greater Gallup economy in numerous ways including training the local workforce, assisting existing industrial employers to sustain and expand operations and by providing information and networking opportunities to companies considering locating in McKinley County.

This past year, we lived and worked through the COVID-19 pandemic and many extensive challenges, sacrifices and changes. We mourn the tremendous loss of lives near and far, acknowledging as well the massive amount of pain and suffering the pandemic has wrought in our communities. This year's Economic Development Week, nevertheless presents the opportunity to showcase Gallup's resilience, and the work economic developers do every day in the Greater Gallup are to build up and protect the local economy, create and save jobs, and improve the quality of life.

Reflecting on 2020, Greater Gallup Economic Development Corporation (GGEDC) shares the sentiment of many people in Gallup: while we may be down, we are *far* from out; because we are Gallup-strong!

What does that mean to GGEDC? Organizationally, we realized early in the pandemic it would take a very long time before life could return to anything resembling "normal". We determined to regard that time of crisis, physical distancing and

economic disruption as an opportunity to deepen GGEDC's knowledge base regarding global, national, state and local market trends, to understand the new economic realities affecting the Greater Gallup community, develop new skills in utilizing Internet technology for our communications with partners, stakeholders and market prospects, and to strengthen and expand GGEDC's strategic network. We went "back to the basics" in terms of GGEDC's alignment with core International Economic Development Council (IEDC) economic development principles and practices, taking a fresh look at the economic landscape to search for emerging development opportunities.

We needed to be strategic in our approach while staying close to the heart of our mission. All our efforts needed to revolve around providing assistance and support to our core partners, the "economic base" employers; those businesses that export goods and services while importing outside dollars into McKinley County.

As a result of our strategic focus, we effected substantial results during the year and throughout the pandemic, even during the months we could not fully access our office. The world was shut down and still, we were moving forward.

Projects and work we advanced:

- ✓ **McKinley Paper Company** - GGEDC secured Job Training Investment Partnership (JTIP) Program funding that helped McKinley Paper Company sustain the eventual closure of the Escalante Generating Station (EGS) and plan for the expansion of its cardboard recycling operation. We also secured a \$5 million Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) grant from the New Mexico Economic Development Department to support an expansion at McKinley Paper Company and preserve 125 well-paid jobs;
- ✓ **"The Gallup Mobility Hub"** - GGEDC laid the foundation for a new industrial sector for the Greater Gallup region in autonomous (driverless) vehicle and mobility technology research and testing. We participated in a statewide oversight committee to roll-out mobility technology in New Mexico, and researched, planned and conducted a digital Roundtable conference on developing a "Gallup Mobility Hub" at the Gallup Municipal Airport. With strong public and private

sector participation and a substantial grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) we are well prepared to assess the economic feasibility of this venture which will be incorporated in the City's airport master plan;

- ✓ Our **Greater Gallup Industrial Workforce Program (GGIWP)** graduated 28 participants. Each earned National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certifications. An additional 5 program participants graduated from a pilot "Introduction to Welding" course;
- ✓ Worked closely with Marathon Petroleum and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association to help communities and workers transition from the closures of the Gallup Refinery and the Escalante Generating Station; and
- ✓ Continued to provide support for planning and developing industrial sites such as the Escalante/Prewitt Industrial Park and Gallup Energy Logistics Park (GELP). We also saw construction begin on Carbon Coal Road which will connect GELP to US Highway 491.

While the devastating impacts from COVID-19 on businesses, the marketplace, and consumers, and accompanying deep losses of jobs, business profits and public revenues will be felt for many years, I believe GGEDC effectively demonstrated its economic resilience - which can be defined as the ability to prepare for shock and crisis, then to recover, survive, and prosper after natural or economic disasters.

Our work over the past year has prepared us well for a challenging but much brighter future ahead. GGEDC, together with other economic developers in the area, have rolled up our sleeves and are getting the job done, because we are Gallup-Strong.

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