

To: Commissioner Debbie O'Malley, Chair and Members,
Board of County Commissioners of Bernalillo County
One Civic Plaza NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

August 7, 2017

RE: A "Win/Win" alternative to the current Santolina proposal

Dear Commissioners:

The August 15th Bernalillo County Commission (BCC) special zoning meeting represents a once in a lifetime opportunity for you to make a major positive contribution to our Community by considering an alternative to the current proposed Santolina development.

The alternative we are proposing is a "land swap" that could represent a positive outcome for all parties, including the citizens of Bernalillo County, Albuquerque and the Middle Rio Grande Region as well as the Santolina investors and developers and the rest of the State. This alternative has been presented to both the BCC and the County Planning Commission on several occasions with recommendations that the County take appropriate steps to further explore its potential.

Major features of this land swap alternative could include:

- Swapping the current Santolina site for a package of infill parcels of land within the County and the City, a portion of which could be designated for affordable housing
- Preserving the current Santolina site as permanent open space
- Creation of a large solar array at the former Santolina site that would provide electric power for Bernalillo County & Albuquerque, possibly via a citizen-owned electric utility.

This is a substantially better idea because it would create a truly win/win opportunity for all parties by:

- Reducing land & infrastructure development costs,
- Allowing investment in existing infrastructure,
- Increasing economic development within the County & the City,
- Enhancing long-term Community viability & resilience,
- Reducing disinvestment in economically depressed areas of the County,
- Stimulating distribution of affordable housing,
- Creating significant transit oriented development (TOD) opportunities,
- Protecting the fragile West Mesa,
- Producing low cost, clean energy for County & City residents,
- Helping create a more attractive urban design for millennials & others who are currently migrating to other cities,
- Aligning current County & City urban planning objectives with contemporary 21st Century urban planning principles,

- Precluding extended, expensive litigation,
- Giving Santolina investors an opportunity to more quickly liquidate a large, currently non-performing financial asset, and
- Creating substantial “good will” toward the Santolina developers as a result of their substantial contribution to the economic development and long-term viability & resilience of our Community.

We recommend that the Bernalillo County Commission take whatever steps necessary to cause further exploration of the land swap concept as an alternative to the proposed Santolina development.

We believe this alternative represents a realistic, practical and exciting potential for our Community that could make a significant long-term contribution to the economy and the quality of life in Bernalillo County and the surrounding Region.

The attached document contains a more detailed description of the land swap idea, along with discussion of our Community’s key physical & cultural assets and how they could be significantly developed within the context of a contemporary high desert urban design stimulated via the proposed land swap.

The land swap and related planning & design ideas presented in the attached document present the Bernalillo County Commission with a once in a lifetime opportunity to significantly & positively impact the Region’s current economic challenges, while properly balancing & prioritizing public & private interests.

Thank you for seriously considering this remarkable opportunity.

Sincerely,

Paul Lusk

UNM Emeritus Professor of Architecture & Planning,
Former Principle Planner, County of Bernalillo & City of Albuquerque
Principle Author of the first A/BC Comprehensive Plan

David E. Vogel

Economic & Community Development Specialist,
Former International & Domestic Strategic & Management Systems Consultant
Founding CEO of the Lovelace Health Plan

Julia A. Stephens

Community Development & Planning Consultant
Health and social resources specialist
Founding Board Member and Former Executive Director, Rio Grande Community Development Corporation

ATTACHMENT:

“The Santolina Land Swap Potential: Optimizing Public & Private Interests”