



For Immediate Release

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**NEW STUDY SHOWS SANTOLINA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT BASED ON UNREALISTIC
AND HIGHLY UNLIKELY POPULATION, JOBS AND HOUSING GROWTH PROJECTIONS**

**Study Commissioned by New Mexico State Legislature
Conducted by UNM Bureau of Business & Economic Research**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM—A new study commissioned by the New Mexico State Legislature and conducted by the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business & Economic Research (BBER) found that the 2013 projections for population growth, jobs created, and number of housing units needed that developers relied on to promote the highly controversial Santolina Development project were “unrealistic” and “highly unlikely.”

UNM BBER published their report, entitled “Potential Impacts from Santolina Development,” on their website in November 2023. The UNM Press Office issued a [press release](#) in December.

An impartial analysis from The University of New Mexico’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) evaluating the economic and fiscal impacts of the proposed Santolina development finds that buildout targets are likely too high, which could generate lower tax revenues than initially expected.

Clearly, the Bernalillo County Commission's (BCC) rationale used to approve the Level A Master Plan was based on inaccurate and unrealistic numbers and projections; because of this uncertainty, the decision should be revisited and reviewed for validity. The analysis is also important because the BCC is considering the new Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan at its March 19th meeting – a Plan that relies heavily on the success of the Santolina project.

The 56-page report is posted on UNM BBER’s website at this [link](#). The one-page executive summary on page 6 can be accessed at this [link](#).

The Report's author, Julian Baca, Senior Research Scientist at BBER, will be making a presentation to the Bernalillo County Commission on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 during the meeting that begins at 5pm.

The BCC meeting will be held in person at 415 Silver Ave. SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102, and online. The agenda will be available [here](#). The public may provide public comment by signing up at this [link](#).

Contra Santolina Working Group is inviting their supporters and everyone who opposes sprawl development, who values water conservation, or who values preserving traditional farming methods and culture in the South Valley, to attend the Feb. 20th BCC meeting and make a public comment urging commissioners to give appropriate consideration to the UNM BBER Study and revisit the BCC's 2015 approval of the Santolina Level A Master Plan.

Quotes:

Marcia Fernandez, Teacher, Grandmother, Farmer and Member of the Contra Santolina Working Group, said, “We told you 10 years ago that Santolina wouldn't work. It doesn't work now, and it won't work in the future. Don't take my word for it—the UNM BBER Study on Santolina's Economic Impacts shows that this is true.”

Maslyn Locke, NMELC Senior Staff Attorney said, “The findings in this important report are also related to the Bernalillo County Commission's (BCC) consideration of the Bernalillo County Comprehensive Plan, scheduled to be heard by the BCC at its March 19th meeting. The Plan, as proposed, relies on the success of the Santolina development to guide future planning and development in the County. We are asking the BCC to send the Comp Plan back to county staff because reliance on a plan based on faulty and flawed assumptions will only lead to development in the County that is also faulty and flawed.”

David E. Vogel, Economic & Community Development Specialist, said, "Given that New Mexico is nearing zero or negative population growth and that neither the economy nor our water supply will support significant population growth, why would Bernalillo County approve and subsidize construction of a development planned for 90,000 residents who will never materialize?"

Elaine Hebard, Community Advocate, said, “Four years after issuing the unrealistic 40-year projections in 2012, UNM's Geospatial and Population Studies (GPS) revised them dramatically downwards, recommending that the earlier ones not be used. GPS revised those projections in 2020, again downwards. Only by relying on the implausible 2012 projections was Santolina remotely viable; with the BBER analysis, clearly that rationale has been proven wrong, requiring the 2015 approval of Santolina be reviewed.

Dr. Virginia Necochea, NMELC Executive Director said, “Santolina, the massive sprawl development still looming in our backyards, was a faulty Bernalillo County Commission decision back in 2015. We urge the current commissioners to reanalyze Santolina keeping the recent BBER study in mind and make an informed decision based on current data that is more accurate and unbiased. Water continues to be a major issue across our state. The last thing our

communities need is a water guzzling development that will put our limited water resources in greater peril.”

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