

## Survey finds tourism potential in city growth

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An ongoing survey of local community leaders has highlighted tourism as a potential growth industry for Alamogordo.

Because of its climate and proximity to numerous attractions, tourism looms as a major "natural," according to a survey conducted by Saturn and Merry Noriega, former owners of NORCOM International Corporation, a Chicago management and marketing firm. The two issued their latest findings in a news release.

"We've already become a magnet for retirees, and with water, transportation and promotions in the mix, other types of industries such as health services, computers, light manufacturing, warehousing and fulfillment operations would find Alamogordo an ideal place," Saturn said in the news release. "But we must seek them out."

Attractions mentioned by respondents included White Sands National Monument, Carlsbad Caverns, Ruidoso horse racing, casinos, skiing, and Apache rodeos and casinos.

Respondents made many suggestions on how to take advantage of Alamogordo's tourism potential, including converting the shopping area on New York to a Western motif with flatboard sidewalks, and promoting the Pueblo style of architecture for local housing developments, business and public buildings.

The survey showed that respondents felt Alamogordo's overall growth has been at a consistent but slow pace the past few decades, and unless spurred on will continue slowly in the foreseeable future, primarily due to the drought cycles, the news release noted.

Respondents felt the city should clean and take advantage of abundant salty water under the Tularosa Basin, before others take control of it as demand grows for the booming El Paso-Juarez-Las Cruces metroplex, as well as in Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

The news release noted participants voiced opinions on several other factors that could impact the city's quality of life and economic development. These include the proposed spaceport north of Las Cruces.

"However, most participants felt that New Mexico leaders should push for more private investment, since it is the only one of several others that is requiring taxes for financing," Merry said.

Merry noted that Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, is building a port in nearby Van Horn, Texas, with private financing through his commercial space venture, Blue Origin

LLC, on 290,000 acres the tycoon has quietly acquired in recent times.

Meanwhile, British entrepreneur Richard Branson has said that his Virgin Galactic expects to ferry 500 people its first year near Las Cruces at \$200,000 each.

"With such a market demand, he should carry most of the load, like Bezos," Saturn said.

State and local governments in New Mexico are investing some \$225 million into the port.

The two have been sharing the survey's results with a number of local service clubs in recent weeks.