

State in spotlight as Economic Development Week kicks off

However, work on 'raising awareness' for economic successes is never over, business leader says

BY MEGAN GLEASON JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Economic Development Week kicks off this week — an effort put on by the International Economic Development Council to shine a spotlight on work completed by professionals and local programs.

Economic development is about more than just building infrastructure, state Economic Development Secretary Rob Black said.

"It's about building communities, and we do that by investing in our businesses that help create those opportunities and investing in our families so that they can take advantage of them," Black said in a recent interview. "When a society feels like they have opportunity, when a family feels like it has opportunity, when you feel like your kids are going to have a better opportunity than you had as an adult, that creates hope for the future."

Economic Development Week, May 12-16, has been around since 2016. Danielle Casey, president and CEO of the Albuquerque Regional Economic Alliance, or AREA, is the vice chair of the board of directors for the International Economic Development Council, or IEDC.

"As a career economic development professional, I have found that our work in raising awareness in our local communities about the importance of investment in economic development is never done," she said in a statement to the Journal.

She said serving on IEDC's board since 2017 and participating as a member of the organization for two decades has created "an amazing opportunity to raise the profile of New Mexico economic development among colleagues across the nation and the globe."

"Even more importantly, I have benefitted from the ability to access and learn from exceptionally talented economic developers in a wide variety of communities and organizations," she added.

Black, confirmed by the Legislature as the EDD secretary during the 60-day session, recently took trips to countries in Asia, including Singapore and Japan, to help get New Mexico on the map as a place

to do business. He said he touted benefits the state offers, from free college to its prime research and development capabilities.

"You start to tell that narrative, and people's eyes open up," Black said.

One of the challenges in attracting companies, however, has been a lack of shovel-ready land for companies to build on, Black said. A couple of new laws signed this year will help address that.

Overall, he said, New Mexico has "a lot to be excited about and to celebrate as we think about where we are."

AREA will host a special event Thursday at Revel Entertainment to celebrate Economic Development Week, where it will air the new documentary "The Evolution and Future Path of Greater Albuquerque's Economy." You can find more information on the event at abq.org/events.

IEDC also has toolkits and relevant reports about Economic Development Week available on its website iedconline.org/pages/economic-development-week.

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