

Hobbs, NM, picked as site of scientific ghost town

May 8 2012, By JERI CLAUSING , Associated Press

(AP) -- Gov. Susana Martinez and a group of investors announced Tuesday that a city in the heart of southeastern New Mexico's oil and gas country will be the site of a new \$1 billion scientific ghost town where researchers will be able to test everything from renewable energy innovations to intelligent traffic systems and next-generation wireless networks.

Pegasus Holdings and its New Mexico subsidiary, CITE Development, had narrowed the list of potential sites to two last month. Officials announced during Tuesday's news conference that Hobbs beat out a location near Las Cruces.

Hobbs Mayor Sam Cobb said the unique research and development will be a key for diversifying the economy.

"It brings so many great opportunities and puts us on a world stage," he told The Associated Press before the announcement.

Not far from the Texas border, the community has been growing and local leaders have been pushing to expand the area's reputation to include economic development ventures beyond the staple of oil and gas.

The city currently has two non-stop flights from Houston each day and is working on getting daily service to Albuquerque and Denver. Cobb said discussions for the new flights have just started but having the research center may bolster efforts to connect Hobbs to more cities.

The investors developing the Center for Innovation, Technology and Testing - or CITE - were looking for open spaces. Another plus was the proximity to federal research facilities like White Sands Missile Range in southern New Mexico and Los Alamos and Sandia national labs.

Bob Brumley, senior managing director of Pegasus Holdings, said 16 communities had expressed an interest in securing the project.

The development is being billed as a first-of-its kind [smart city](#), or ghost town of sorts, on about 15 square miles west of Hobbs.

It will be modeled after a typical American town of 35,000 people, complete with highways, houses and [commercial buildings](#), old and new. No one will live there, although they could. Houses will include everything from toilets to washing machines.

Brumley has said the project will create about 350 permanent jobs and has the potential to create thousands more.

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Citation: Hobbs, NM, picked as site of scientific ghost town (2012, May 8) retrieved 4 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-05-hobbs-nm-site-scientific-ghost.html>

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