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Consultant Wants To Build on Image

By John Arnold
For the Journal

SANTA FE — Consultants hired to help Santa Fe plan for a more prosperous economic future offered two different observations about their newest client last week.

One praised Santa Fe for its worldly reputation and its rich mix of culture, art and scenery.

The other described an economically troubled city plagued by a skyrocketing cost of living, too many low-wage jobs and an aging work force.

Executives with AngelouEconomics, an Austin consulting firm, were hired for \$95,000 to develop a strategy for attracting new businesses, helping existing businesses grow and further cultivating an already lively culture of entrepreneurship.

According to the firm's director, Angelos Angelou, the plan will aim at building on Santa Fe's strengths, especially its well-known name and character.

"This city's unique, and any strategy has to fit with the uniqueness of the city," he said.

Consultants plan to analyze the city's economy, target promising business sectors and write a five-year economic and marketing strategy.

Angelou said the six-month planning process will include significant input from the community collected through focus groups, interviews and surveys. Residents and business owners can fill out online surveys at the project's Web site, <http://www.cultivatesantafe.com/>

Angelou said a lack of business diversity is one of several factors contributing to unfavorable economic conditions in Santa Fe. He also cited a lack of young blood in the work force. He said 25- to 44-year-olds currently make up less than 30 percent of Santa Fe's work force. Any figure less than 34 percent, he added, is not favorable for a dynamic, high-tech economy.

Angelou also stressed the importance of closing the wide gap between income and the cost of living in Santa Fe, where he said the median home value is \$182,000, compared with a national median value of \$119,600.