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## HP Expected To Bring RR 'Huge Boost'

**By Rosalie Rayburn**

*Journal Staff Writer*

News that a household name high-tech company plans to bring more than a thousand jobs to Rio Rancho within four years has city officials buzzing.

Gov. Bill Richardson's announcement Thursday that computer and peripherals manufacturer Hewlett-Packard plans to open a customer service and technical support center in Rio Rancho brought a shout of joy from Rio Rancho Regional Chamber of Commerce President Debbi Moore.

"Yaaaaay!" Moore crowed, predicting that the planned center would inject new life into the city.

"This could be a huge, huge boost to Rio Rancho's economy and its gross receipts revenues," Moore said in an interview at her chamber office after the announcement.

Rio Rancho saw gross receipts taxes, which provide more than 50 percent of the city's revenues, drop 7 percent, or \$2.5 million, in the last year, primarily due to a slump in construction activity.

Chamber vice president of member services Paul Barabe anticipates that the center could reinvigorate home construction activity in the city, which has suffered with the nationwide housing slump.

Speaking at a news conference in Santa Fe, Richardson said HP plans to open a 150,000-square-foot center in 2009 with a few hundred employees, increasing to a workforce of 1,300 by 2012.

The center will be located on city land in part of Rio Rancho's new downtown area, east of City Hall, which has been designated as the city's central business district. HP hasn't picked an exact site but is looking at different possibilities within the general area, said City Manager Jim Payne.

"I'm certainly excited about the whole prospect of them coming to our downtown," Payne said in a phone interview.

City staff and elected officials have been working with Rio Rancho Economic Development Corp., a nonprofit tasked with bringing new development to the downtown area.

Payne believes there were other cities in New Mexico and out of state competing with Rio Rancho to woo HP, but he had no details.

City Hall and the Santa Ana Star Center are the only buildings in the downtown area.

Central New Mexico Community College and the University of New Mexico have announced that they plan to build a campus in Rio Rancho's downtown.

UNM recently said it would include a hospital in its campus plans.

HP is the second private corporation to announce plans to build an operation in Rio Rancho's downtown. Lionsgate Entertainment signed a deal with the city in 2006 to build a movie studio downtown, but the company has still not broken ground.

“With the hospital and CNM and UNM coming to this area and now with HP, it's certainly a big addition to the downtown area and it's certain to be a big asset,” Payne said.

He expects HP's presence in the city would entice more retail businesses to locate in Rio Rancho, a goal frequently mentioned by Mayor Thomas Swisstack and councilors.

“(HP's center) is the beginning of some of the things that the mayor and governing body are trying to bring about,” said District 6 Councilor Kathy Colley, whose district includes the new downtown area.

Richardson said during his news conference that he plans in the next legislative session to make a capital outlay request for \$12 million to help build out infrastructure, such as roads and sewer lines, to the HP center.

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## Gov.'s announcement

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