

EY + Santa Fe Data Collection and Analysis

Quality of Life Committee
April 2, 2025



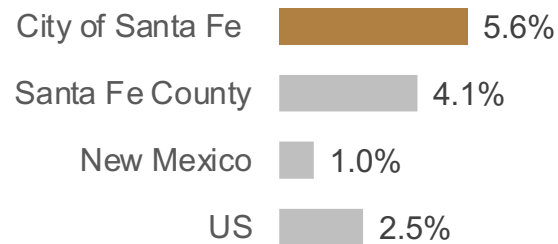
CITY OF SANTA FE
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Project Background

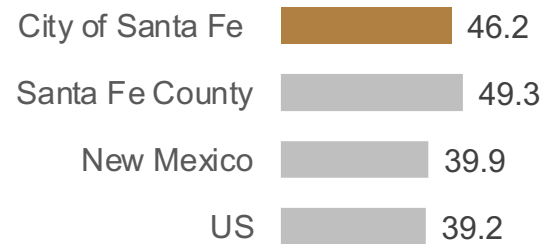
- ❑ EY was engaged by the City of Santa Fe to collect and analyze data related to the community, its economy, industries and workforce.
- ❑ The analysis will set the foundation for a future economic development strategic plan.
- ❑ The project also includes virtual interviews with stakeholders for on-the-ground insights to complement our data findings.
- ❑ Current status:
 - Completed review of recent plans and studies
 - Data analysis and interviews mostly completed
 - Need to work with City to review material and identify potential target industries
- ❑ Purpose of this meeting is to inform you about the project and key findings related to quality of life and hear your perspectives

Community assessment highlights

Population growth, 2018-2023

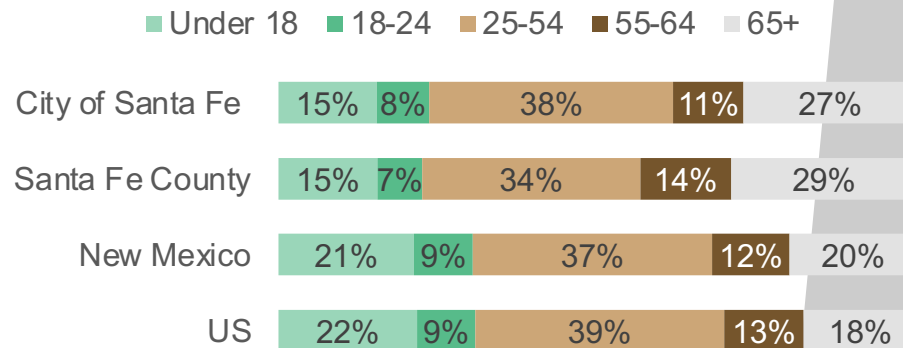


Median age, 2023



The city's population growth has outpaced the county, state, and US in recent years. Although the median age of the city's residents is 7 years older than the US, it has a similar share of people in the 25-54 age group.

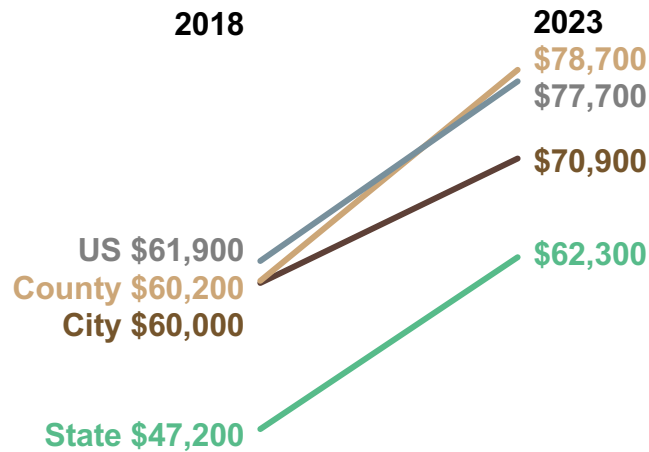
Population by age group, 2023



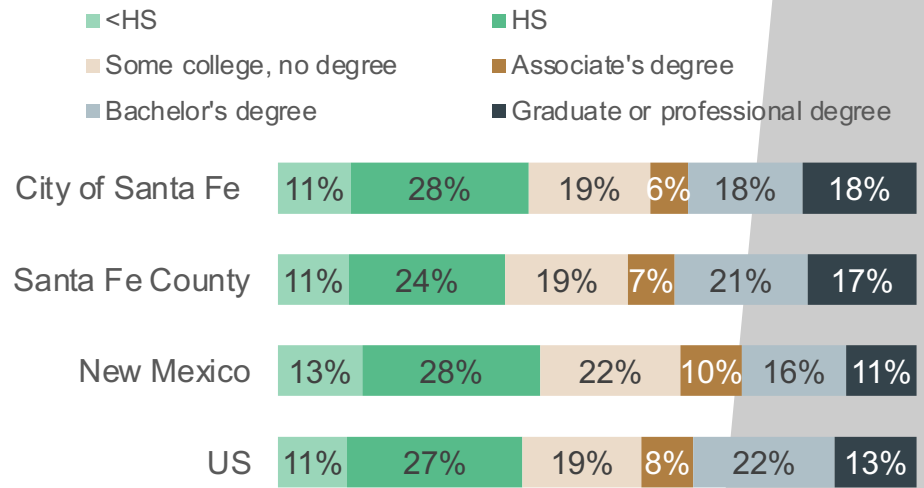
Community assessment highlights

Median household income in the city rose 18% from 2018 to 2023, compared to 31% in the county and 32% in the state. The city and county have higher shares of residents with a graduate or professional degree (18% and 17%, respectively) compared to the US (13%).

Median household income



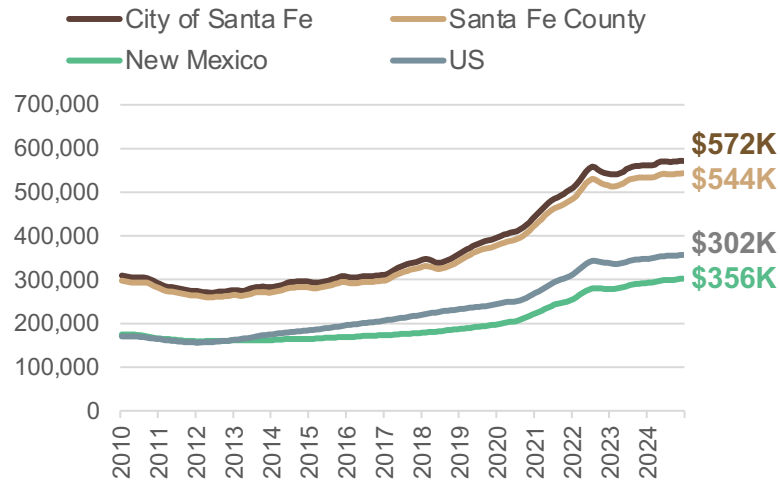
Educational attainment, age 25-64, 2023



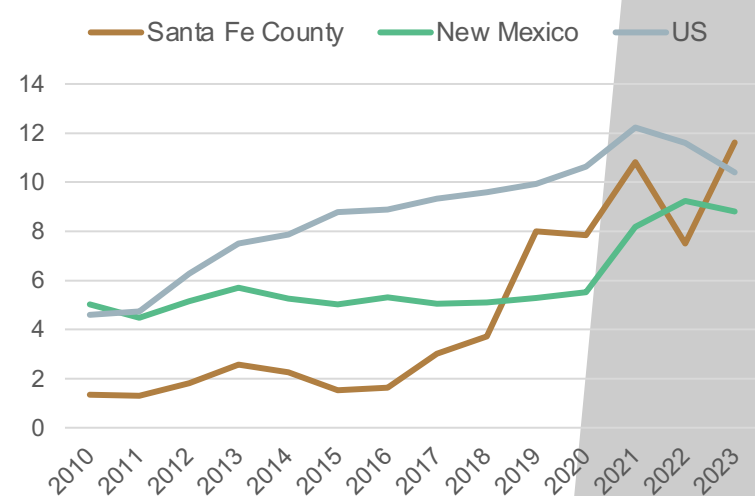
Community assessment highlights

As recently as 2017, the difference in housing value between the city and the US was in the low \$100Ks. This gap has increased to \$215K as of end of 2024. Housing construction, after being dormant for much of the 2010s, has since picked up to levels above the state and US.

Average home value



Housing permits per 1,000 existing units



Stakeholder interviews completed

- City of Santa Fe
- Dangerous Ventures
- Los Alamos National Laboratory
- Motiva (consultant for workforce development strategy for City)
- New Mexico Economic Development Department
- New Mexico Startup Alliance
- Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board
- PNM
- Regional Development Corporation
- Santa Fe Community College
- Santa Fe Community Foundation
- Santa Fe Public Schools
- United Way of North Central New Mexico
- University of New Mexico

Community Strengths

❑ Strong brand and identity

- “People from here are proud of being here. People who have visited feel it’s unique.”
- “Major events are living symbols of Santa Fe.” (e.g., Indian Market, Zozobra, literary festival)
- “Key assets include the brand of the city, art market, Native American arts, diverse population.”

❑ Quality of life

- “Santa Fe is a very livable city, great quality of life and place. Professionals, scientists and others can make a good living.”
- “The best restaurant in Los Alamos is in Santa Fe.”
- “There is a great quality of life and we need to be able to tell that story.”
- “I come across the digital nomad a lot.”

❑ Access to state capital and agencies

❑ Community collaboration was noted by some respondents as a strength, though others found gaps

- “There is good government and economic development interaction with businesses.”
- “There is willingness and openness for collaboration between entities across government, nonprofit and other sectors. We are being invited to partner with organizations.”

Community Weaknesses

□ Workforce

- “Lots of restaurants have shortened hours.”
- “Our construction industry is competing with southeast New Mexico’s energy industry.”
- “Healthcare and trades are areas of workforce need and opportunity. We no longer know how to deliver babies or swing a hammer – what is wrong with us?”
- “Every year, they’re cutting funding for youth education programs.”
- “I’m not sure of the stickiness of Santa Fe for the youth and young professional cohort. Nightlife is lacking, and even amenities for young families. There is a STEM boomerang here - a lot of people leave and come back.”
- “It’s hard to keep younger people in Santa Fe. We don’t have the Google type startup environment.”

□ Opposition to development and change

- “Development is limited by zoning, permitting, and political will.”
- “Public opposition to workforce housing and multifamily development.”
- “Santa Fe is big on nostalgia, but we also have to continue to change with the world.”
- “We can’t be a museum but acknowledge that things change, stay who we are and don’t jeopardize what makes us attractive. Adapt, change, be smart, stay Santa Fe.”
- “There’s some resistance to big business, change, only maintaining status quo – this mindset needs to change.”
- Risk of not changing: “There’s nothing wrong with a specialist city, but you if have all your hats on one rack, that can tip over.”

Community Opportunities

❑ Expanding economic mobility

- “There is more opportunity for growth in the south side and outlying areas. How can these areas be developed to support economic mobility?”
- “We need to invest in people, focus on human and social capital. Santa Fe aims to be a just city. We take care of the people most at risk.”

❑ Some respondents noted Santa Fe’s **competitive advantages** and work that could be done to view those in context of other communities.

- “We should be attuned to what other cities and states are doing.”
- “Commercial real estate, while costly, is still more affordable than major hubs like Bay Area or Austin.”

❑ **Assets** and **partnerships** that could be better leveraged

- “The New Mexico job training program is a resource where training costs are partly reimbursed and might be more utilized by Santa Fe firms.”
- “We need intentional pathways for workforce development. SFPS has done a great job establishing a baseline.”
- In education and training programs for high-demand fields such as trades and healthcare, “people are finding employment even while still in the program.”
- “New Mexico SBA is one of the biggest assets we have for startups.”
- “There’s a great deal of wealth that could be rallied for capital investment. There is a brain trust in Santa Fe that could be tapped for management of startups.”
- “LANL is unique in having Appendix N, funding to develop technology ecosystem and then promote economic development in area, including direct technical assistance to New Mexico businesses.”

Community Threats

- ❑ Gaps and challenges in **quality of life**: housing costs, cost of living, crime, schools, parks, retail and services for residents
 - “Our demographics are older but senior services aren’t as strong as they should be.”
 - “More retail chains would help with livability and appeal to families and general quality of life for residents.”
 - “New Mexico can incentivize new investments but what will keep them here? Healthcare, schools aren't up to par.”
 - “How can we invest more in the school system? Especially with the city's demographics?”
 - “When people think of New Mexico, they start with Santa Fe. There’s extreme wealth and generosity, but also a big segment of community that’s left out. We need more access and opportunity for the Hispanic community.”
 - “Cost of living is so high. We're at risk of losing people who’ve been in Santa Fe for a long time. They've already been pushed out of the core.”
 - “I don’t know how people can get started living here. A lot of people commute in from Rio Rancho or have to move into rural communities. A lot of people continue to live with their families.”
- ❑ Although federal funding around Santa Fe is concentrated in energy and security, **federal policy** may still have impacts.
 - “I've heard anecdotally that labs have frozen hiring. We have smaller contractors for the Department of Energy for whom it’s unclear whether their business will be affected.”
 - “Immigrant workers are at risk. We have about 60,000 undocumented workers in the New Mexico economy. Leisure and hospitality will be hit hard.”