

# Letter of Interest for Santa Fe Planning Commission Board Seat

Application Highlighting Project Management, School Board Financial Oversight, and Building Development Committee Experience

To the Santa Fe Planning Commission Selection Committee,

I am writing to formally express my interest in a board seat on the Santa Fe, New Mexico, Planning Commission. As a dedicated community advocate with a proven record in project management, disaster management, grants and financial oversight. As a member of the Not Your Ordinary School (NYOS) School Board, I served in leadership roles as the Financial Oversight and Building Development Committee Chairs. I am confident that my skills and experiences align strongly with the Commission's mission to foster thoughtful, sustainable growth and equitable urban planning throughout Santa Fe.

## Background and Commitment to Santa Fe's Future

Santa Fe is a city characterized by its vibrant culture, extraordinary history, and a community spirit that values both its heritage and progressive outlook. My commitment to Santa Fe's future is rooted in my belief that urban planning must be collaborative, transparent, and responsive to the needs of all residents. The Planning Commission sits at the heart of this vision, shaping the direction of housing, development, and public spaces that define our city.

With my background in project management, emergency management and education governance, I am passionate about bringing a strategic, results-driven approach to the Commission, ensuring that our planning processes are not only efficient and innovative but also inclusive and fiscally responsible. My approach is always guided by the principle that effective governance combines technical expertise with a deep respect for community voices.

## Relevant Experience

### Project Management Expertise

Throughout my career, project management has been a cornerstone of my professional identity. I have successfully led multifaceted initiatives requiring cross-functional

collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and rigorous attention to budget and timelines. My experience encompasses the full project life cycle: from conceptual planning, resource allocation, and risk assessment, to execution, quality control, and project closeout.

Notably, my project management experience has been shaped by my involvement in large-scale educational and recovery projects. I have coordinated with architects, city officials, and contractors to deliver projects on time and under budget. This experience has honed my skills in negotiating complex regulatory environments, securing necessary permits, and ensuring that all project phases comply with relevant zoning and land use requirements. My ability to facilitate consensus among diverse stakeholders has often been cited as a key strength, enabling me to shepherd projects from vision to reality while maintaining transparency and accountability at every stage.

## NYOS School Board Financial Oversight

Serving on the NYOS School Board, I took on significant responsibilities related to financial oversight, contributing to the stewardship of a multimillion-dollar operating budget. I participated in finance committee meetings, led budget review processes, staff compensation, leadership searches and closely monitored expenditures to ensure alignment with our strategic priorities. My efforts were directed not only at maintaining fiscal discipline but also at maximizing the impact of every dollar invested in our school community.

During my tenure, I helped implement policies that improved budget forecasting, enhanced transparency, and established clear metrics for financial performance. By collaborating with other board members and administrative staff, I worked to create a culture of financial prudence and long-term sustainability. These experiences have given me a nuanced understanding of public sector budgeting, resource allocation, and the importance of accountability to stakeholders who the Planning Commission is ultimately accountable to.

## Chairmanship of the Building Development Committee

As the Chair of the NYOS Building Development Committee, I led a diverse team tasked with planning, financing, and overseeing major capital projects, including new construction and facility upgrades. This role required a sophisticated understanding of land use, zoning regulations, contractor negotiations, and facility design. I cultivated relationships with municipal agencies, architects, engineers, and community members, ensuring that our projects met not only the technical and regulatory requirements but also the aspirations and needs of those who would ultimately use the spaces.

I am particularly proud of my leadership in developing a new school facility that balanced innovative design with community input, safety considerations and environmental sustainability. We prioritized open communication, hosted public forums, and incorporated feedback to create a facility that became a point of pride for our school and neighborhood. My leadership style is collaborative and transparent, grounded in the belief that successful project outcomes emerge from genuine partnership between decision-makers, subject matter experts, and the people they serve.

## Vision for Planning in Santa Fe

If selected for the Planning Commission, my vision is to promote responsible and responsive growth that enhances Santa Fe's unique character while meeting the diverse needs of its residents. Key priorities I would champion include:

- **Sustainable Development:** Advocating for environmentally sustainable practices in all planning and development decisions, with a focus on renewable energy, water conservation, and green public spaces.
- **Affordable Housing:** Supporting policies and projects that expand affordable housing opportunities and prevent displacement, ensuring that families of all backgrounds can continue to call Santa Fe home.
- **Community Engagement:** Enhancing transparency and public participation in planning processes, making sure that community voices are at the table and that information is accessible and comprehensible.
- **Historic Preservation:** Respecting and preserving Santa Fe's architectural and cultural heritage, integrating new development with the existing urban fabric.
- **Efficient Infrastructure:** Collaborating with city partners to ensure that infrastructure improvements—roads, public transit, utilities—are planned and implemented with future growth, equity, and resilience in mind.

## Working Style and Core Values

My approach to board service is characterized by integrity, diligence, and a commitment to consensus-building. I am attentive to detail and adept at balancing competing priorities without losing sight of the broader vision. I value ongoing education and professional development and am committed to staying informed about trends and best practices in urban planning, zoning, and community-led development.

Above all, I believe in the importance of public trust. As a board member, I would work to uphold the highest standards of ethics and transparency, ensuring that every decision is guided by the long-term interests of Santa Fe's residents and neighborhoods.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Thank you very much for considering my application for a board seat on the Santa Fe Planning Commission. I am excited by the opportunity to contribute my skills and experience to the Commission's important work and to collaborate with fellow board members, city staff, and the wider Santa Fe community.

I welcome the chance to further discuss my qualifications and vision for sustainable, inclusive growth in Santa Fe. Please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience for an interview or to request any additional information.

With deep respect and appreciation,

Matt Embry

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