

Netflix buying Albuquerque Studios

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Aerial view of Albuquerque Studios (Roberto E. Rosales/Albuquerque Journal)

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Netflix is making Albuquerque its home away from home.

The entertainment giant is in negotiations to purchase Albuquerque Studios and will make it the streaming giant's principal production hub in the United States.

Albuquerque Studios has been for sale for a few years. Officials did not release details about the sale price of the studio.



Ty Warren, Netflix vice president for physical production, talks about the streaming giant's choice of Albuquerque for its production hub. (Roberto E. Rosales/Albuquerque Journal)

The state is contributing \$10 million of Local Economic Development Act funds. Albuquerque is contributing \$4.5 million of LEDA funds. Because the city is acting as fiscal agent for the LEDA funds, the project will be sent to the City Council for approval.

Albuquerque Studios includes nine sound stages, production offices and a backlot.

If the deal is approved, the Albuquerque site will be Netflix's first hub purchased in the United States. Earlier this year, Netflix announced it was establishing its first European production hub in Spain.

The purchase is expected to cause a ripple effect that would benefit the other major studios in New Mexico – I-25 Studios, Garson Studios, Santa Fe Studios and Las Cruces Studios – as other productions seek studio space for their projects.

Starting a relationship

New Mexico's relationship with Netflix spans years.

Netflix has brought projects such as the Emmy-winning Western series "Godless," as well as "Longmire," "Chambers," "Messiah," "The Ridiculous 6," "Daybreak," "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" and "Walk. Ride. Rodeo."



Michelle Dockery, left, starred in the Emmy-winning miniseries “Godless.” Robert Taylor, top right, filmed the Netflix series “Longmire” in New Mexico. Adam Sandler, bottom right, in a scene from the Netflix film “The Ridiculous 6.”

Ty Warren, Netflix vice president for physical production, said that between the infrastructure and existing crew base in New Mexico, it was a win for the company to move here.

“I think you look at the amount of content that we’re making, specifically, here in Albuquerque, and we’re making a large piece of content here, it makes economic sense for us to have a hub here since the content we’re creating is here” Warren said.



Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller, New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez and Ty Warren, Netflix vice president for physical production, during a press conference on Monday at Albuquerque Studios. (Roberto E. Rosales/Albuquerque Journal)

Gov. Susana Martinez backed the deal and said it's always been important to grow New Mexico business.

“After years of hard work to cut taxes and make New Mexico business-friendly, we’re seeing incredible results,” Martinez said. “Now, New Mexico is leading the nation in economic growth and lowering unemployment, and we’ve brought the world’s leading internet entertainment service, Netflix, to our state.”

Albuquerque has regularly been ranked in the top 10 of the trade magazine Moviemaker’s best places to be a filmmaker. The New Mexico film industry has been growing steadily for more than 15 years.

By the numbers

\$14.5 million
in Local Economic
Development Act funding

9
sound stages at
ABQ Studios

1,000
people per year will
be hired by Netflix

\$1 billion
will be spent on production
over 10 years

“The facts are really important,” Mayor Tim Keller said. “There will be 1,000 jobs per year, which is the largest Albuquerque-based jobs program that we can think of.”

The jobs that will be created Albuquerque run the gamut of film and TV production work, most of which is project-based contract labor.

“They are high-paying, and that is extremely rare,” Keller said. “The film industry has its own career ladder. It doesn’t matter where you went to school, and it’s one of the great industries where you are rewarded for as good as you are at your job.”

Alicia J. Keyes, city of Albuquerque’s film liaison, said many of the jobs will be technician jobs. And many of the jobs are expected to pay \$70,000 a year.

“Albuquerque Studios has been a rental house for years,” Keyes said. “Now you have a production and distribution company that can create their own content.”

Growing an industry

Keller said Netflix was impressed with the experience of crew workers in New Mexico.

“Our workforce was ready,” Keller said. “We have studios, like this one they are buying.”

Keyes is quick to give credit to the foundation that has been laid over the past 16 years.

NM-Netflix relationship

Netflix said so much content was already being made in Albuquerque that it made sense to have a hub in the city. Some of the projects:

Godless	2017
Longmire	2015-17
Chambers	2019
Messiah	2019
The Ridiculous 6	2015
Daybreak	preproduction
The Ballad of Buster Scruggs	2018
Walk. Ride. Rodeo.	2019

She credits previous and current film directors for the state and city, including Nick Maniatis and Ann Lerner, and her relationship with Jason Hariton, head of Worldwide Studio Operations and Real Estate for Netflix.

“Jason managed ABQ Studios years ago; he knows the facility well,” Keyes said. “So he was open to having a conversation and was proactive about purchasing such a world-class facility for Netflix.”

Albuquerque beat out other places such as Denver, Salt Lake City, Austin, New York, Georgia and Los Angeles.

Keyes said, “Netflix’s commitment to Albuquerque is the result of years of support for this industry by the Legislature, the administrations and the New Mexico people. Our state’s commitment to the entertainment industry has paid off in a big way, especially when you consider the amount of outside money flowing into our community.

“Last year, just in Albuquerque, film/TV brought in over \$180 million of direct spend, and that does not count the indirect money from tourism and monies spent outside of production.”

With Netflix buying Albuquerque Studios, all the studios will get work pushed out to them, said Nick Maniatis, director of the New Mexico Film Office.

“It’s really good for the state, and they will be hiring people from New Mexico,” Maniatis said. “It won’t have a negative impact. The rest of the studios will be busy with work that would normally go to Albuquerque Studios.”

Maniatis said the deal also calls for \$1 billion worth of production spent over 10 years.

“This means a lot of people will be working,” Maniatis said. “They have plans to start a training program and that will help our folks getting into the industry.”

Keyes said working on the deal began 10 days after she was hired.

“The foundation was already there, and we made the right calls,” Keyes said. “Everybody worked together to see the industry succeed. I was coming into this with a mayor who is film-friendly. Everything aligned, and it’s going to benefit the industry.”