

NM land commissioner says 'laser focus' on new housing benefits communities and state

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📷 The State Land Office seeks developers to develop new housing or commercial properties on four vacant lots it owns in Albuquerque. (Photo courtesy State Land Office)

The New Mexico State Land Office is seeking developers to convert four parcels of state trust land in Albuquerque into new housing or other commercial developments, part of what Commissioner of Public Lands Stephanie Garcia Richard said is a strategy to use trust lands to revitalize local economies while also benefiting statewide public schools and other institutions.

Garcia Richard told Source NM that her office identified the four parcels – all small, largely vacant lots in each of the city's four quadrants – as uniquely well-suited for housing or commercial development due to their proximities to amenities like schools, shopping centers and gyms. Her office last week issued a [request for interest](#) from companies that would develop the properties through long-term leases.

The State Land Office oversees 9 million surface acres of state trust land and issues leases aimed at generating revenue for public services. The vast majority of the roughly \$2 billion in revenue it's collected annually in recent years comes from oil and gas royalties generated in rural areas. Garcia Richard, as well [as some of the candidates running to replace her](#), say a key priority of the office is diversifying its revenue streams through the use of renewable energy or commercial development.

Housing can be a part of that portfolio, Garcia Richard said, as long as the office has the right “laser focus” on the appropriate parcels.

“Most folks in New Mexico know that our housing stock – we’ve got a big deficit,” she said. “So any time we can have creative solutions to create more housing, I think we should be doing it.”

According to recent estimates, the state will need [58,000 new housing units](#) by 2045 to accommodate projected household growth, including more than 21,000 new units in the Albuquerque area.

During Garcia Richard’s tenure, the State Land Office has facilitated the development of new housing projects for senior citizens and low-income tenants in both the Albuquerque and Las Cruces areas.

The [Luminaria and Farolito developments](#) in Albuquerque, built between 2022 and 2025, created 180 affordable housing units for seniors through a lease on state trust land.

In East Las Cruces, the [Mesa Vista development](#) announced last year will create 4,100 new housing units, including more than 600 units dedicated to those who made less than 80% of the area median income. (In Las Cruces and Doña Ana County, 80% of AMI is roughly \$56,000 for a family of four.)

Garcia Richard, a Democrat who is term-limited from running again, said she hopes that her successor continues considering new housing as a productive use on state trust lands, especially if the housing spurs development nearby. Three Democrats are running in the June 2 primary, including state Rep. Matthew McQueen (D-Galisteo), Jonas Moya and Juan de Jesus Sanchez III. The winner will face Republican Michael Perry in the general election.

“Putting these anchor tenants there, I think, can really help with stability and just a sense of creating community,” she said. “So, I would like to see my successor do more of that kind of thing.”