

## NM governor details fight for Facebook data center

LOS LUNAS, N.M. — It won't be long before the bulldozers start clearing a lonely patch of rangeland in central New Mexico to make way for the newest of the massive data centers located around the globe that keep Facebook humming.

The social media giant plans to break ground in October, setting in motion what Gov. Susana Martinez and other officials hope to be a cascade of economic development in the high-tech sector.

Martinez and other officials gathered in Los Lunas, just south of Albuquerque, on Thursday to celebrate the announcement that Facebook had chosen the usually sleepy village for its next data center.

More than 20 states were initially considered. Only New Mexico and Utah were competing until officials in that state began raising questions last month about the millions of dollars in incentives it would take to woo the company.

Martinez said Thursday that had it not been for her meeting with Facebook executives more than a year ago during a trip to California, New Mexico wouldn't have been a contender.

"They cast a wide net. Nearly half of the country was in the running, so as a state we should feel proud of ourselves. This was no minor feat," the Republican governor said. "Companies like Facebook don't just close their eyes and pick a place on the map."

The announcement comes as New Mexico struggles to rebound from a downturn in the oil and natural gas sector that has rippled throughout the state's entire economy, resulting in job losses in the energy sector and reduced tax revenues. The state's coffers are taking the hit, and lawmakers are preparing to debate options for shoring up a growing budget deficit.

Martinez told a crowd of dozens of people Thursday that had it not been for the oil and gas downturn, the state's over-the-year job growth would have been the strongest it's been since 2006.

While the Facebook data center won't bring but several dozen permanent jobs with it, officials said the addition of such a globally recognized company to the state's portfolio

will help attract other businesses.

Economic Development Secretary Jon Barela said New Mexico was in a very different position six years ago, with few prospects in the pipeline and policies that hampered recruitment.

"Businesses were not only not looking at New Mexico, but many businesses — large and small — were looking at leaving the state," he said.

He said bipartisan efforts and the governor's leadership have helped to make the state attractive. That work, he said, has culminated with the landing of Facebook, which he predicted will amount to the largest capital investment in the state since computer chip manufacturer Intel built its factory in Rio Rancho three decades ago.

Facebook expects to invest about \$250 million in the first phase of the data center. Multiple phases are possible, officials have said.

Ken Patchett, one of Facebook's data center operations directors, said in a statement that the Los Lunas facility will be one of the most advanced, energy-efficient centers in the world. It will be powered by solar and wind-generated electricity and have an evaporative cooling system capable of protecting the servers inside from New Mexico's frequent dust storms.

Once the infrastructure is in place in Los Lunas, Martinez said she hopes others will take notice. "They'll be able to say, 'Let's go to this location. Let's make this a technology center that is going to be top-notch,'" she said.

State economic development officials have traveled to California several times in addition to making stops in Chicago and Boston to talk with business executives. Martinez said negotiations are ongoing with several companies, but nondisclosure agreements prevented her from revealing more details.

"It's not just one deal with Facebook. We've got other things in the pipeline," she said.



**New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez is joined by outgoing Economic Development Secretary Jon Barela as she talks about Facebook's decision to locate a data center in the state during a news conference in Los Lunas, N.M., on Thursday, Sept. 15, 2016. Martinez said New Mexico would not have been on the radar of the social media giant had it not been for a meeting she had with executives in August 2015. (Photo: Susan Montoya Bryan/The Associated Press)**