



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

Alicia J. Keyes
Cabinet Secretary

Amber Dodson
Director

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CONTACT: Jennifer Esquivel
505-469-2915
Jennifer@nmfilm.com

Albuquerque and Santa Fe Top MovieMaker Magazine's Best Places to Live and Work as a MovieMaker

Young Michigan filmmakers take note and choose to relocate to New Mexico



SANTA FE, NM – Today, *MovieMaker* Magazine named two New Mexico cities on their list of Best Places To Live and Work as a Moviemaker in 2021. For a third year in a row, Albuquerque is the #1 Best Place to Live and Work as a Moviemaker in the Big Cities category and Santa Fe was ranked #2 in the Small Cities and Towns category.

"This honor belongs to all of New Mexico, not just these two cities," said Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. "The secret is well and truly out: New Mexico is the best place to film in all of the United States. With more long-term industry investments on board, we will continue to invest in this incredible job-creation engine and spread the success of our production efforts to more New Mexicans and more parts of New Mexico."

"It comes as no surprise that Albuquerque and Santa Fe for multiple consecutive years have continued to be ranked as top cities to live and work as a Moviemaker," said Alicia J. Keyes, Cabinet Secretary, Economic Development Department. "We are building an end-to-end production ecosystem, while providing New Mexicans with well-paying jobs and opportunities

for local businesses to diversify their revenue streams. New Mexico's status as a production hub for film and television has been cemented with recent moves like the revamped film and television production tax incentive, the addition of the NBCUniversal production facility, and the monumental Netflix studio expansion. We look forward to continued growth of the film and television industry in the years to come."

MovieMaker determined the winners using surveys, research on tax incentives, and recent productions, and personal visits to most of the locations on the list, as well as the best available information on how they're coping with the pandemic.

Tim Molloy, Editor-in-Chief, *MovieMaker* Magazine said, "Albuquerque and Santa Fe are very attractive draws for anyone looking for natural beauty, culture, and affordability – and thanks to huge investments by Netflix and NBCUniversal, among others, industry professionals no longer have to choose between quality of life and career opportunities. The rise of the Albuquerque-Santa Fe corridor is one of the most incredible movie and TV industry stories of the last decade, and we're also intrigued by smaller, rising areas like Las Cruces. New Mexico has become a major film and TV hub that still looks to have astonishing potential."

MovieMaker Magazine's Best Places to Live and Work as a Moviemaker 2021:

BIG CITIES

1. Albuquerque
2. Atlanta
3. Austin
4. Chicago
5. Vancouver
6. Philadelphia
7. Montreal
8. Miami
9. Boston
10. Calgary, Alberta

SMALL CITIES AND TOWNS

1. New Orleans
2. Santa Fe, New Mexico
3. Pittsburgh
4. Savannah
5. Victoria, British Columbia

"Thanks to *MovieMaker* Magazine for again taking note and recognizing our great state. Albuquerque has been ranked #1 for three consecutive years and Santa Fe has sustained a top 5 ranking for the past 5 years. This is a new era for the film and television industry in New Mexico and this recognition by *MovieMaker* Magazine comes as no surprise because New Mexico is a world-class production hub," said Amber Dodson, Director, New Mexico Film Office.

Dodson added, "In recent years we have seen increased production activity as well as production spend, and two major studios have set roots in New Mexico. This is all because of the smart investments made by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to develop a competitive tax incentive program that benefits New Mexico. Our state offers what other places just can't buy—world-class crews, diverse locations, great weather, close proximity to Los Angeles, a competitive production tax credit, and an affordable and quality lifestyle."

The industry and those who work in it are taking note to the recent rankings and growth in New Mexico.

In 2020, Alexis Berent and Alejandro Rodriguez, a young couple from Michigan made the decision to move to New Mexico after job opportunities dried up due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As two graduates-to-be from Eastern Michigan University, Alexis and Alejandro were like any other college graduates in their senior year beginning to make plans to secure jobs. They considered moving to Chicago as well as remaining in their home state.



“I received a few offers to interview for some local news stations and Alejandro was a few steps into the interview process to be a promotions producer. It seemed like everything was falling into place. Alejandro and I knew that wherever we went we wanted to go together, whether we stayed in Michigan or not, so the fact that we were getting job offers in the same area was amazing. Then COVID hit and the jobs were gone. One month before graduation and all of the plans we made vanished. We had no idea what to do and started looking into Chicago again or maybe even Atlanta,” said Berent.

“Los Angeles was not in the cards financially even before the pandemic, so when that was nixed we looked at Atlanta, Chicago, and New York City. After we couldn’t fully initiate a move to Chicago, or anywhere on our list, it seemed like staying in Michigan would be the move, but the world shut down, hiring freezes were set in place, and we felt like there was little to no hope until a simple google search and an article changed the trajectory of our lives,” said Berent

Alexis, determined to pursue the couples dreams as filmmakers, searched the internet for ‘best cities for filmmakers to live’ hoping to find options outside of the obvious choices. The first article she came across was Best Places to Live and Work as a Filmmaker by *MovieMaker Magazine*, and saw Albuquerque, New Mexico was ranked number one.

“I was shocked because I never would have even considered it in the top ten. So we started doing more research and found more articles and stories about how the film industry is booming in New Mexico, and I just knew it was where we needed to go. I always trust my gut and it told me that this was the move for us. We had already spent the past year saving up to move to a big city, and it is actually more affordable than other places we were considering,” said Berent.

“The first time I was told to keep an eye on Albuquerque was in my Industrialization of American Cinema class at Eastern Michigan University in 2018. My professor mentioned, in passing, that the state of New Mexico began picking up traction and attracting productions with enticing tax incentives and a topography similar to that of California, and that specifically Netflix was a company betting on the state big-time. To be honest, I don’t think I thought of New Mexico for at least 15 months after that lecture,” said Alejandro Rodriguez. “The article left us dumbfounded when Albuquerque triumphed over places like Atlanta and Toronto.”

After lots of planning, research, and finding the perfect apartment, the couple packed up a moving truck and started their three-day drive to New Mexico.

“Something about New Mexico seemed right. We weren’t taking the biggest financial risk thanks to the state’s low cost-of-living, and we could potentially be in the best place to start our careers and quickly move up. We had nothing to lose. We learned everything we could about Albuquerque, the state’s film industry beyond the massive Netflix investments, got some virtual tours, and now we live right in Downtown Albuquerque,” said Rodriguez.

“We have now lived in New Mexico for three months and love it so far! I know we made the right choice, we have already found many opportunities in our new state and I am excited to see what our future here holds,” said Berent.

The couple added, “In such a short time we have already been able to find work. Which is all we could ask for. We have each been hired as production assistants for two features now, and have both been cast as background actors a few times. I am living my dream of being a working actress in a big city, it doesn’t get any better than this.”

“As the secret gets out, it feels like New Mexico - Albuquerque specifically - is primed for an entertainment business boom. First and foremost, human safety and health is the priority. Once the vaccine is out I can see New Mexico undergoing an economic boom once the normal workflow of production can resume,” said Rodriguez.

For the complete details and the 2021 list of Best Places to Live and Work as a Moviemaker visit MovieMaker.com. The issue is available on newsstands on February 2.

CONTACT: *MovieMaker* editor-in-chief Tim Molloy: tim.molloy@moviemaker.com

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The New Mexico Film Office
1100 S. St. Francis Drive, Suite 1213
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(505) 476-5600
info@nmfilm.com
nmfilm.com

A division of the New Mexico Economic Development Department



The Economic Development Department's Mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive.