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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 28, 2022

State and local LEDA funds assist family owned sign business purchase new location, expand

Deluxe Design plans to double in size, hire 30 new employees

RIO RANCHO, N.M. – The State of New Mexico has approved LEDA economic assistance to a family-owned design, sign, and screen printing company so it can purchase a facility to expand operations and more than double its employees.

[Deluxe Design](#), a Rio Rancho company that started in 1986 inside the garage of Sandy and Norman Ruth, is relocating to a property in Rio Rancho and doubling its manufacturing and office space to 24,000 square feet to accommodate new production equipment, streamline workflows, and develop new products.

The company expects to add 30 employees, expanding its headcount from 24 to 54 within five years. The New Mexico Economic Development Department (EDD) is pledging \$250,000 to the expansion from the Local Economic Development Act (LEDA), while Sandoval County and the City of Rio Rancho are each pledging \$75,000 for a total of \$400,000. The company is investing \$5 million in the expansion.

Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has made investments in home-grown New Mexican companies a priority for LEDA, with other assistance provided to long-time family businesses Bueno Foods in Albuquerque, Capitol Bar & Grill in Socorro, and G-Boyz Beef Jerky in Bayard, among others.

"With support from Gov. Lujan Grisham, the Economic Development Department is expanding our assistance to small businesses in the coming year with more local and community representatives," EDD Cabinet Secretary Alicia J. Keyes said. "We want to ensure businesses of all sizes across New Mexico can utilize EDD's expertise to grow in their local communities and create jobs."

The assistance would be paid out in phases as the business reaches economic development and job-hiring thresholds established in a Project Participation Agreement.

The new 2.5-acre property at 3646 NM Highway 528 NE in Rio Rancho includes covered storage for trucks and operations equipment, which are utilized in a growing portion of sales, as Deluxe Design services live events and concerts nationwide.

The Ruth family started the company in their Rio Rancho garage with a focus on trophies, plaques, and engraved signage for local fraternal and community groups, financial institutions, and small businesses. Early on, Intel became, and remains, one of their major clients. As it grew, the business moved into a retail space on Southern Boulevard in 1987. In 1988 Deluxe moved to Rio West Business Park. After 10 years, and multiple expansions, operations were moved again in 1998 to its current location at 561 Quantum Road NE, where the facility is no longer adequate for their growing manufacturing needs.

Deluxe Design is still a family business with Sandy Ruth as President, Norman Ruth as Vice President, son Justin Ruth as Live Events and Operations Manager, and daughter Jasmine Ruth as a Project Manager. Their youngest daughter Tasha Koyama has contributed to the design department and assists with social media marketing. The company is also led by longtime employee and General Manager Dianna “DRose” Jones, and Business Development Manager Lane Glover.

The company now provides signs, banners, plaques, awards, architectural ADA signage, and a full complement of design services and screen printed products. A major portion of work includes event signage and products for the entertainment, live music, and event industry. Serving a diverse customer base ranging from Live Nation and AEG to Samsung, and many large general contractors, as much as 85% of its sales come from outside the state of New Mexico.

Norman Ruth said the COVID-19 pandemic hit the business extremely hard as live events got postponed or cancelled. But with federal grants and loans from the Paycheck Protection Program and EIDL, as well as support from city, state and county programs, the Rio Rancho Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Sandoval Economic Alliance, they were able to keep operating, pay employees, and survive.

Now as the customer base and live events return, Ruth said they see the need to diversify their offerings more than ever to be more resilient across different industries. The expansion is a big part of that, and the state and local assistance is integral to the effort.

"This ideal property is designed to satisfy the ever-increasing and innovative requests of our clients and increase our ability to do research and development of new products, services, and sustainability within the market. Due to the increase of construction and material costs, this expansion is estimated to come in over \$400,000 more than anticipated during the planning process," Ruth said.

"It is only with LEDA that this project can move forward successfully. The assistance from the city, county, and state is giving us this opportunity to thrive and grow," Ruth added. "Deluxe Design is already one of the leading companies in the state in this industry and LEDA can now give us the support that will allow us to move forward successfully and be a leading company regionally. We are very fortunate and thankful that EDD recognizes this and is offering this support."

The City of Rio Rancho is the fiscal agent for the project and the city's contribution is pending review and approval by the Rio Rancho Governing Body.

“It is fantastic to see a great home-grown Rio Rancho company deepen its roots and create quality jobs with this expansion. I applaud Sandy and Norman and the Deluxe Design team for building a best-in-class industry leader right here in Rio Rancho,” Mayor Gregg Hull said. “I thank Secretary Keyes for her continued support of business retention and expansion through LEDA and JTIP as a cornerstone of New Mexico’s economic development. I also thank Fred Shepherd of SEA [Sandoval Economic Alliance] for his efforts to programmatically support local companies, like Deluxe Design, through Economic Gardening and other business diversification initiatives.”

Sandoval County Manager Wayne Johnson said the expansion is testament to the strong economic partnerships in the region that can come together to help small businesses. “The county is excited to once again partner with the State of New Mexico and the City of Rio Rancho to support business development and retention in Sandoval County. Deluxe Design is a homegrown success story whose track record of overcoming unexpected challenges and building an expanding business, is a true inspiration.”

The Sandoval Economic Alliance assisted the company in its expansion planning. “Sandoval Economic Alliance has had the pleasure of witnessing Norm and Sandy’s hard work and dedication through the years. They truly embody the entrepreneurial spirit and drive, and we are lucky to have such a wonderful business in our community,” Fred Shepherd, President and CEO of Sandoval Economic Alliance, said. “SEA had the opportunity to assist them through our Economic Gardening program and their current expansion process and is happy to be able to collaborate with the New Mexico Economic Development Department, the City of Rio Rancho, and Sandoval County to help make this happen.”

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The New Mexico Economic Development Department's (EDD) mission is to improve the lives of New Mexico families by increasing economic opportunities and providing a place for businesses to thrive. EDD's programs contribute directly to this mission by providing funding to train our workforce, providing infrastructure that supports business growth, and helping every community create a thriving economy. Since Jan. 1, 2019, EDD has supported more than 13,000 new jobs and trained 8,323 New Mexicans for better pay. EDD has utilized LEDA to make investments in 53 businesses, supporting more than 7,500 new jobs at an average wage of \$70,000, \$531 million in annual payroll, \$5.2 billion in new capital investment, and a ten-year economic impact of \$30+ billion. Thirty-nine communities across 22 counties have benefited from EDD programs.