



Mark Sweeney, a senior principal with South Carolina-based McCallum Sweeney Consulting, spoke about the site selection process at a NAIOP lunch Nov. 13.

Rachel Sapin | Albuquerque Business First

By [Rachel Sapin](#) – Reporter, Albuquerque Business First
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The site selection process for companies today is "more competitive than ever," according to [Mark Sweeney](#), a senior principal with South Carolina-based [McCallum Sweeney Consulting](#).

Sweeney, whose firm has helped Hertz and other large companies with site selection in recent years, was the key speaker at a [NAIOP](#) luncheon at the Albuquerque Marriott on Monday.

Sweeney said his firm of nine people helps businesses primarily with office and manufacturing needs.

"On a blank slate, the southeast U.S. represents the most advantageous and competitive locations for manufacturing," he said.

He said site selectors have these fundamental factors in mind when helping a company determine the next location for their headquarters or manufacturing site.

Sweeney said companies are looking for sites that are "ready for quick development." He said companies want to locate somewhere where they will not have surprises. Because they have so many options, companies make deadline-driven decisions in terms of where they want to locate and communities need to be prepared.

He said his firm narrows down locations for a company in four phases. The first two phases consist of a regional analysis where his firm will research an area and talk with local businesses and business leaders.

"Private interviews are the most important source of information," according to Sweeney.

The second two phases are where incentives and negotiations kick in, he said.

"Think of incentives strategically. They've got to meet the needs of a prospect," Sweeney said.

He said the most important part of incentives is their ability to mitigate the weakness a company might see in a location, such as availability of workers. Incentives do influence a company's final decision, even if they are not considered in the first phases of site location, he added.

He said it was important for cities such as Albuquerque —with a smaller workforce in a relatively remote region — to have a deep understanding of its labor force, both current and future.

"Companies are worried about, 'Are we going to be able to recruit the people we want from Raleigh and Silicon Valley to work here and live here,'" he said.

He said Albuquerque should focus on its entrepreneurial development as a way to lure companies here because office space is affordable and remoteness may be less of an issue.

He closed his remarks emphasizing Albuquerque's need for segmentation in its marketing. Those include targeting markets with investment and jobs from outside the state through recruitment, investment in jobs inside the state through expansion and retention, and creating new jobs in the state through entrepreneurial development.

"All three segments taken together, represent a source of potential investment and employment," he said.

Albuquerque and New Mexico as a whole have been pushing hard to attract entrepreneurs to set up shop here, from the [city's \\$1 million campaign](#) to the state's Job Training Incentive Program and the Local Economic Development Act. The most notable move made to establish the Duke City as an entrepreneurial hub is the massive Innovate ABQ project, using seven acres near Downtown [with an estimated total price tag as high as \\$150 million](#).