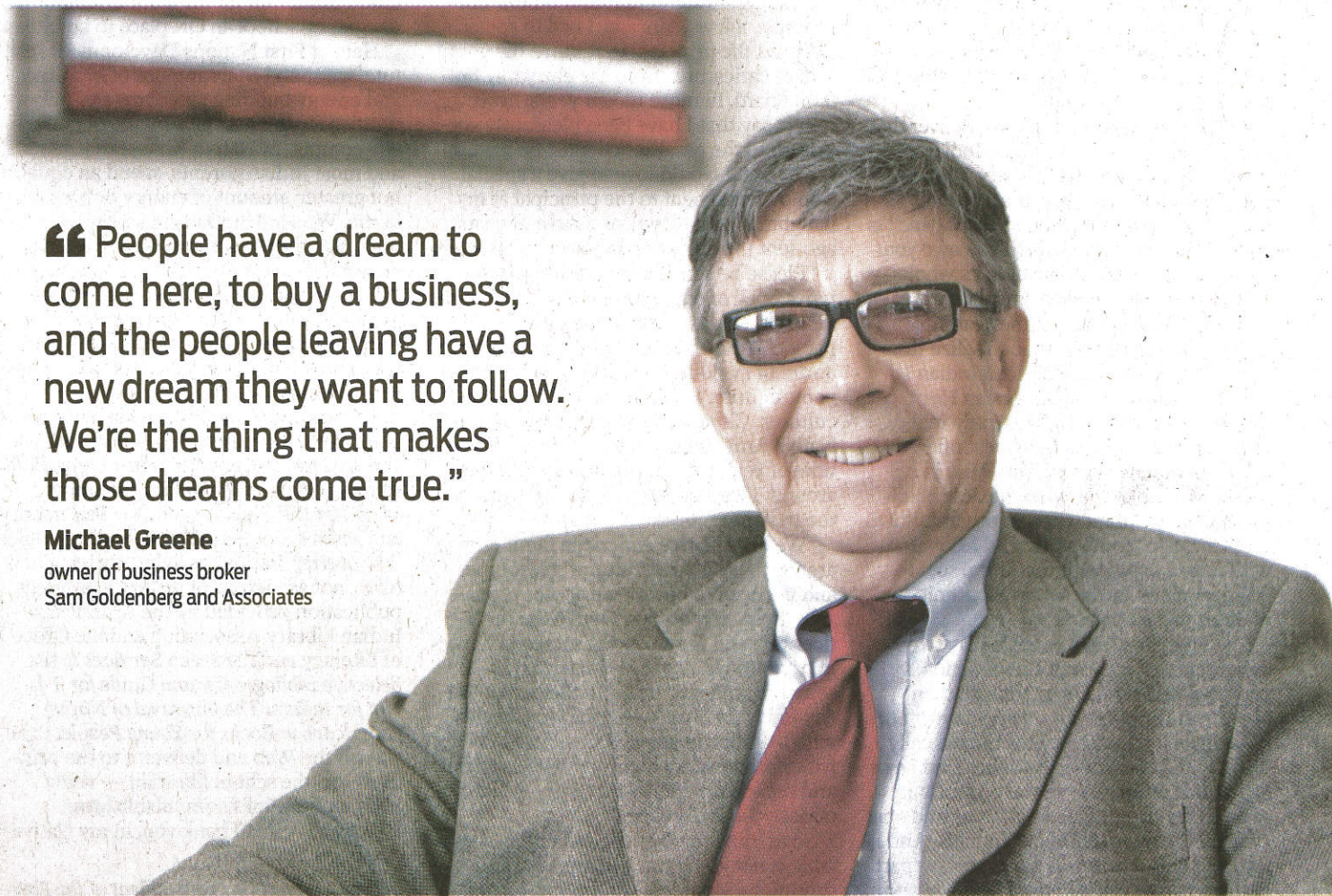


# LOCAL BUSINESS

“People have a dream to come here, to buy a business, and the people leaving have a new dream they want to follow. We’re the thing that makes those dreams come true.”

**Michael Greene**  
owner of business broker  
Sam Goldenberg and Associates



Michael Greene is the owner of Sam Goldenberg and Associates, the largest business broker in New Mexico. LUIS SÁNCHEZ SATURNO/THE NEW MEXICAN

## Dream machine

Business broker helps bring new entrepreneurs to Santa Fe

By Dennis J. Carroll  
For The New Mexican

**K**evin McBride, born and raised in the American West but now living part-time in Florida, has had his eye on moving to Santa Fe full time.

He said he had been looking for a way to move to the City Different, which has the “perfect blend of climate, culture and nature,” and settle into the community, so was shopping around for business opportunities.

“I was looking for two things,” McBride said, “a good consumer-oriented business and a terrific location.”

With the help of Michael Greene, owner of business broker Sam Goldenberg and Associates, McBride found that combination in his purchase this year of the Häagen-Dazs/Plaza Bakery on the southwest corner of the Plaza. Until a couple of years ago, the business had long been in the hands of Fred and Patti Libby. Their sale of the business to Texas investor Ralph Koslin in the summer of 2011 apparently turned problematic.

It’s the qualities of the city cited by McBride — that its special lure often turns visitors into residents — that makes Santa Fe unique in its ability to attract new businesses and new owners for old businesses. “Some people want to buy a business to get to Santa Fe,” Greene said. “But it needs to be a perfect storm” involving finances, family matters and timing, he said.

Greene, along with fellow business manager and consultant Steve Dennis, took over the brokerage firm shortly after the sudden death in 2007 of Goldenberg, who had founded it in 1983 and ran it mostly as a one-person shop out of his home in the Quail Run neighborhood. (Dennis moved to Texas several years ago.)

“[Goldenberg’s] family very much wanted it to continue,” Greene said. “There was a legacy there.”

Greene, a Harvard Law School graduate with extensive merger and acquisition endeavours in Southern California, expanded Goldenberg’s operations extensively.

“We thought we needed to build up scale quite a bit,” said Greene, who had previously

founded the Goldsmith Group, with clientele across North America. He added three staff members, established a downtown location and waded deep into Internet marketing.

“We have major Web presence everywhere because it is becoming more important to reach out effectively,” Greene also stepped up the number of business and other property evaluations.

Greene’s firm, which is part of the global Sunbelt brokerage network, now also conducts evaluations for such matters as business sales and buyouts, attorneys and divorces.

He said one of the main client complaints about business brokers and related firms is that they “don’t return phone calls ... I have made it a top priority to keep our sellers informed all along the way. We don’t want people to feel we list their business and forget about them, because we don’t.”

Greene said he senses an uptick in Santa Fe’s business economy since the virtual crash in late 2008. “In the years 2009 and 2010, it was harder to sell businesses. People were

interested but they were fearful that the downward trends were going to continue.”

Since 2011, he said, there was a definite sense of a rebound, and in the past couple of years, the firm has returned to its late-2007 levels.

He said the company’s goal is to maintain a sales listings of 30 to 40 businesses, which include much of Northern New Mexico, and to negotiate one sale a month, or about one-third of the listings. (Up to 40 percent of the company’s sales are businesses outside of Santa Fe, said Mark Griffith, Greene’s senior associate.) The firm takes a 10 percent commission on all sales.

“As we sell listings, we take on new listings,” Greene said. “And we try to be as diverse as we can.”

Greene’s current listings of businesses pretty much run the gamut from restaurants and nightclubs, retail and wholesale businesses, building trades and service-oriented firms. They include hot dog and chocolate shops, restaurants, coffeehouses, a sporting goods store, a private school, a publication and a plumbing company.

Some listed businesses, he said, such as the Wow Dawg Eatery, Cafe Cafe and The Spice Lady, don’t mind being mentioned publicly. Others, not so much.

Greene also sees himself as a chief promoter of the city. “A lot of what we do is sell Santa Fe.” Reflecting McBride’s feelings, Greene said that many from outside New Mexico who end up buying or starting a business here “do so because they want to live here, and recognize that at heart this is a small-business community, and they feel the best way to be part of a community is to own a business.”

It’s no great exaggeration to say that Greene sees himself and the company as dream-makers, for both buyers and sellers. “People have a dream to come here, to buy a business, and the people leaving have a new dream they want to follow. We’re the thing that makes those dreams come true.”

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