

2050 Forecast: There's Room for Sustainable, Smart Growth in Prescott

A "Better Prescott" will require growth. Growth can occur in ways that are sustainable and responsible...when we grow smarter, everyone wins. The Quad-city area would not be able to offer employment prospects to our local citizens, excellent infrastructure, or amenities such as entertainment, dining, or shopping unless we continue to grow and develop in an orderly, sustainable direction. Clearly, the attractiveness of this region has been enhanced by many of the residential, retail, and employment projects developed over the past 15 years which have improved our quality of life.

Some are quick to criticize every aspect of growth that has been promoted in the past 2 decades. It is evident that Prescott must be doing something right in order to be recognized as:

- **One of a Dozen "Distinctive Destinations"** by the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- **A Top 10 True Western Town** by True West Magazine
- **One of "7 Great Places to Live"** by Bottom Line
- **One of "Top 100 Cities to Live and Launch a Business"** by Fortune Small Business
- **"Top Green Arizona City "** by Sperlings Best Places
- **One of "100 Best Communities for Young People"** by America's Promise
- **One of "Top 5 Places to Retire"** by Money Magazine

In regards to the way Prescott is being marketed, all one has to do is check out the Chamber's website at www.prescott.org or www.arizonaguide.com to see that Prescott's history and charm are highly valued and represented. Headlines such as "Everybody's Hometown" and "Prescott....Where History Lives On" are key attractions for tourism along with the outdoor beauty of the national forest, lakes, and hiking trails. A previous article stated that "Prescott's tourism has been declining in recent years ". Here are some facts regarding tourism in Prescott from the Prescott Area Coalition for Tourism:

Prescott's tourism's numbers have increased over 70% in the past 7 years. In 2006 Prescott's increase was 15.3%-vs.- the State of AZ increase of 4.9%. The 2007 number shows a 6.7% increase. The current number in the face of the \$4.00 per gallon for gasoline is a decrease of only 2.6% year to date, however, the high tourist season is just beginning. The Frontier Days Rodeo has set record ticket numbers the past two years. One in four jobs is dependent on tourism in our city.

Regarding recent remarks concerning retail and office buildings as "doing nothing for our economy". According to Economic research, each 100,000 square feet of retail space generates 250 direct jobs and an additional 58 indirect and induced jobs, for a total of 308 jobs. These jobs create total wages of 7.3 million and generate total economic output of \$15.1 million annually.

It is undeniable that the economy is struggling throughout the nation as well as the Quad-City area; however, it is not a solution to have a "temporary moratorium on construction." If residents think this economic slump is bad, wait until a suggested moratorium kicks in! The tax dollars and impact fees that new developments have created are necessary to our economy. They provide major funding towards the improvements made to our infrastructure as well as improving our city related services. The old adage, "If one is not growing, one is dying", is applicable to healthy communities such as ours. As a region, it is incumbent upon us to continue to grow and develop while preserving the natural and limited resources upon which we depend.

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