

ASU report defines, tackles Arizona's sustainability concerns

Devin Fuller

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Two groups at Arizona State University have released a first-of-its-kind report detailing sustainability issues in Arizona.

The report, "Sustainability for Arizona: The Issue of Our Age," provides essays by 24 policy leaders and thinkers from Arizona and across the country on sustainability, as well as several facts and statistics about the issue.

The report was released last week by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy and the Global Institute of Sustainability, or GIOS, at ASU.

"Sustainability is about much more than just being green," Morrison Institute Director Rob Melnick wrote in the report. "It's about making policy choices that take the economy, society and the environment into account."

Contributors to the report include ASU President Michael Crow, former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt, ASU School of Sustainability Director Charles Redman, Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, author Barbara Kingsolver and an assortment of ranchers, developers, educators and business leaders.

Jonathan Fink, the Julie A. Wrigley director of GIOS, was asked by Melnick to contribute an essay.

"Rapidly growing places can learn from each other about how best to design sustainable cities from scratch," Fink wrote in the report. "The same pressure we face in Arizona - immigration, urban heat island, limited water supply, and vulnerability to energy disruption - are problems that millions of the world's urban dwellers either confront now or will soon."

Melnick said he felt Arizona was an important state regarding sustainability efforts.

"Arizona is a poster child for a state that wouldn't be here without technology that makes it sustainable," he said.

Melnick said it took nearly two years to compile all of the information in the report, longer than any other report written by the Morrison Institute. He said he hoped it will provide a common database for those seeking to discuss the issue.

"It's not a pessimistic document, not an optimistic document," he said. "It's realistic."

Melnick said the accessibility of the report makes it better for those who may not necessarily know a lot about sustainability issues.

"You can read it cover to cover and learn a lot, and you also can read things that are self-contained," Melnick said.

Fink said the report is easy to understand and filled with essays that are "profound in their implications for the sustainability of our region, country and world."

"I hope it will persuade a few more people to take the issues of sustainability seriously," he said.

The Morrison Institute analyzes public policies concerning Arizona and performs research to inform and advise Arizona leaders.

The GIOS conducts research related to sustainability, especially in urban environments.

The report is available for viewing at www.morrisoninstitute.org.

<http://img.azcentral.com/news/articles/1203sustain1203.html>