

Gilbert looks at attracting holistic and women's health care

Jan. 17, 2008

By BETH LUCAS

[*The East Valley Tribune*](#)

CONTACT WRITER: (480) 898-6373 or blucas@evtrib.com

Gilbert's Town Council voted Tuesday to spend another \$30,000 investigating whether holistic and women's health care is a reliable and realistic future economic niche.

The town could end up spending as much as \$100,000 analyzing whether — and how — to attract the kind of medical research and health care facilities that would provide the high-paying jobs and industry it needs.

"It's something special for Gilbert," said Kathy Langdon, president and CEO of the Gilbert Chamber of Commerce. "It's what makes Gilbert unique. The focus is on family and health."

But still questioned by council members, including Councilwoman Linda Abbott, is how big of an industry the town could attract — and whether it would stand out, or simply be another city with medical facilities but no major national ranking.

Last year, the town hired Arizona State University's Morrison Institute for Public Policy at a price of \$33,000, to study whether the health care and medical industry is a viable concept for Gilbert. On Tuesday, the council voted to spend \$30,000 studying what kind of services and firms Gilbert could attract and whether they would have the networking to thrive.

A third and final phase of the project, which would also cost about \$30,000, would be a marketing plan helping the town implement its plans.

Langdon told the council during a special meeting Tuesday that the goal is long term but reachable. In fact, she said, the opening of two hospitals that support the concept — Banner Gateway and Mercy Gilbert medical centers — as well as a holistic health center planned adjacent to Mercy Gilbert, are catalysts for the concept.

Gilbert's interest in the medical industry has already begun to attract firms, including a proposed naturalpathic college, Langdon said.

Laurie Eberst, CEO of Mercy Gilbert Medical Center at Val Vista Drive and the Loop 202 Santan Freeway, said she has been focusing on hiring female specialists who are now studying more specifically how to care for women's heart health and other health needs.

According to results from the first phase of the study, Gilbert has many benefits to attract a thriving health care industry.