

## **WHICH WAY PINAL?**

### **Region faces big challenges as population booms**

By Terry Doolittle, Pinal County manager

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When Arizona's economy depended on the 4 C's - copper, cotton, citrus and cattle - Pinal County was a leader in two of them.

These historic sources of wealth - cotton and copper - still play a role in the region's economy, but dramatic population growth and new economic drivers make this a different time.

This new era demands new vision, new ideas, and new ways of thinking, even as we keep past strengths in mind.

The new report, "The Future at Pinal: Making Choices Making Places," is an important step toward a new vision and new ways of working as a region.

The work of ASU's Morrison Institute for Public Policy has particular value now because of the challenges and unique situations Pinal faces.

Our growth trajectory is clear. Our transportation issues are substantial because homebuilding has outpaced the building of roads and transit capacity. New residents have high expectations, and governments are competing for resources.

Many of Pinal's residents leave the region to work.

Pinal is adapting to a new balance between urban and rural communities and priorities. Collectively, we must make the most of the opportunity to create a vision and a comprehensive plan that will guide the region to a sustainable future. We know that all eyes are on us because of Pinal's location and the scope and scale of the expected growth.

Because of Pinal's needs and circumstances, last fall the Pinal County Board of Supervisors asked Morrison Institute for input on three questions:

- What would differentiate Pinal from other places in Arizona and across the country?
- What would ensure the livability and competitiveness of the cities and towns and the entire region?
- What would bring Pinal's current and future residents together?

We wanted to know how other counties have responded to the pressures of rapid growth, what leaders and residents want for the future, and how Pinal could adapt. The goal was to identify 21st-century "placemaking" innovations that will set Pinal apart and support the long-term success of its cities, towns and communities.

The report presents significant ideas to deal with the challenges we face.

Arizona Sen. Carl Hayden famously advised his congressional colleagues to act like "workhorses" rather than "show horses." With "The Future at Pinal," the comprehensive planning process, the complementary initiatives under way, other efforts and a commitment to regional solutions and collaborative actions, Pinal is following Senator Hayden's recommendation.

For example:

- A public-health district was approved to support more and better health services for children; a mobile clinic is now on the road. Pinal was selected to test a program to allow elderly, disabled residents to choose their own caregivers, thus allowing them to live independently in their homes.
- Pinal County government's new call center makes it far easier for residents to get information and assistance.
- Superior's "Wi-Fi" network is working, and Eloy's system will soon be on the drawing board.
- An open-space master plan and regional transportation plan have been completed and will be incorporated into the comprehensive plan.

As Chairman Lionel Ruiz noted recently, "The Board of Supervisors is committed to ensuring strong, livable communities and increasing our quality of life.

"We want to see how we can make Pinal better to benefit everyone. If we don't act now to put more tools in place, it will soon be too late. Our children and grandchildren will appreciate that we all worked hard to plan for Pinal's land and its future."

To achieve a livable, competitive future, Pinal must tackle the hard questions and take creative steps to implement the best possible choices. If we make those choices, we will succeed in making great places.

For information on the Pinal Comprehensive Plan, visit <http://www.PinalCountyPlan.com>.