



The Greater Phoenix Region

The Region

The Greater Phoenix region is comprised of 24 communities, all located within Maricopa County — the nation's fourth largest county in terms of population, and the 14th largest relative to land area. Approximately 60 percent of Arizona's population lives in Maricopa County. The county's population grew from about 2.1 million in 1990 to 3.5 million in 2004, an increase of 66 percent in 14 years, making the region one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. Like many fast-growing metro areas, the transportation system in Greater Phoenix has not been able to keep up with population growth.

The Business-Led Organizations

Established in 1888, the *Greater Phoenix Chamber* is Arizona's oldest and largest chamber of commerce. Its membership represents 5,000 companies; the Board is comprised of about 50 representatives from small and large businesses in the region. The cornerstone of its activities is threefold: 1) Support the growth and development of business and the quality of life in Phoenix; 2) Champion the voice of business in government; and 3) Keep businesses informed, connected and prosperous. (For more information, visit www.phoenixchamber.com.)

The *Arizona Chamber of Commerce* was established in 1974, and advocates on behalf of the state's business interests at the state capitol. Its focus includes state budget issues and reform, the defense and aerospace industries in the state, economic development, education, health insurance, taxation, transportation, and water and natural resource issues. Its legislative priorities for 2005 include property tax relief, litigation reform, accountability in K-12 education, and reform and transparency in the state budget process. (For more information, visit www.azchamber.com.)

Greater Phoenix Leadership (GPL) had its origins as the Phoenix 40, founded in 1975 by business leaders to bring their influence to bear on key priority issues. Comprised of about 90 top leaders, GPL's priorities include education (P-20, early childhood through graduate school and workforce development), transportation, military facilities in the region, crime prevention, community enhancement/quality of life, and state finance. Its major role is as a convener for business leadership to engage around specific issues. GPL takes a strategic approach to seek long term results on selected regional and statewide issue. Issues are not city-specific. (For more information, visit www.greaterphoenixleadership.com.)

The *Greater Phoenix Economic Council* (GPEC) focuses on enhancing the public/private partnership for economic competitiveness of the Phoenix region. Formed

in 1989, it is comprised of private- and public-sector members who work collaboratively to develop and implement regional economic development strategies. In 2002, GPEC launched a 10-year regional economic development strategy to build a focused economic identity and increase the quality of jobs in Greater Phoenix. The overall objectives of the strategy focus on shifting development from quantity of growth to quality of growth; execution of a comprehensive regional strategy; and improvement in education, transportation, and tax/fiscal policy and alignment with the economic development strategy. GPEC collaborates with other business organizations in the Greater Phoenix region under the auspices of the Business Coalition to ensure the strategy's success. (For more information, visit www.gpec.org.)

WESTMARC — the Western Maricopa Coalition — was founded in 1990 to influence public policy issues in western Maricopa County. Primarily funded by business and industry members, it also includes government, education, arts and culture, and human services organizations, as well as chambers of commerce and civic leaders. Its focus is on transportation, economic development, water rights, human resources, and the preservation of Luke Air Force Base. WESTMARC hosts the Western Maricopa Enterprise Zone, an alliance of 11 political jurisdictions that offers property tax reductions and/or corporate income tax credits to new and expanding businesses who increase job opportunities, capital investment, and business vitality in the Zone. The WMEZ encompasses more than 5,600 square miles in Western Maricopa County. WESTMARC also hosts Leadership West, a leadership development program for western Maricopa County through a series of intensive monthly workshops on subjects ranging from government, education, and transportation to health and human services and public safety. (For more information, visit www.westmarc.org.)

The *East Valley Partnership* is a coalition of civic, business, educational and political leaders from Ahwatukee, Apache Junction, Chandler, Fountain Hills, Gila River Indian Community, Gilbert, Guadalupe, Mesa, Queen Creek, Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, Scottsdale, and Tempe dedicated to the economic development and promotion of the East Valley. Its focus areas include economic development, education, transportation and infrastructure. In addition, the Partnership advocates in the areas of the arts, government and tribal relations, healthcare, tourism and development of livable communities. (For more information, visit www.evp-az.org.)

The Regional Business-Civic Landscape

It is impressive that Phoenix's business leaders are developing new working relationships among themselves to address significant regional issues. This has manifested in the formation of the Business Coalition and how each of the member organizations have divided up the critical issues:

- **Education:** Greater Phoenix Leadership
- **Transportation:** WESTMARC and East Valley Partnership
- **Civic Center Expansion:** Convention and Visitors Bureau
- **Economic Development:** Greater Phoenix Economic Council

- **Agenda:** Arizona Chamber of Commerce
- **Tax and Fiscal Policy:** Greater Phoenix Chamber

While some of the organizations have stepped up to specific issues, it was their combined support for these issues that led to their successes. The strength of the Business Coalition is based on support from all of the organizational members.

The ultimate goal of the Business Coalition is to bring to the decision-making table — as a partner with Arizona policymakers — a strategic business perspective to impact the short- and long-term economic vitality of the state. The Coalition never intended to be a new organization — rather it's a collaboration among existing organizations, a venue for thinking and planning beyond the goals of individual business leadership organizations; prioritizing the issues facing the region; and bringing resources and expertise to policy making.

The Business Coalition had its genesis in the fall of 2001 when the leadership of the GPEC and GPL met to determine how to spark cooperation around regional economic development. It wanted to influence change on critical regional issues and found a great deal of overlap among the business-civic organizations. Moreover, a number of business executives were wondering aloud why they belonged to so many business organizations to which they paid dues, and whether they were getting their money's worth from their overlapping membership in these organizations. This was particularly significant in light of other regions, notably Pittsburgh and Cleveland, where business organizations had merged.

In November 2001, Bill Post, CEO of Pinnacle West Capital Corporation and Chair of GPL, convened the major business organizations in Phoenix to establish a common agenda. Approximately 185 business leaders met to discuss various issues. The Morrison Institute for Public Policy at Arizona State University analyzed the findings from the meeting and helped the group develop the issues agenda noted above.

Upon development of the agenda and assignment of roles and responsibilities, the Business Coalition became “personally engaged” by working with the governor and legislature to develop and “sell” new initiatives, testifying at legislative hearings — a role that had previously been left to the organizations’ paid lobbyists — and personally serving on and chairing boards and taskforces.

This personal engagement and coordination led to several successes. State funding led to dramatic expansion for downtown Phoenix convention facilities; legislation for a transportation sales tax initiative; new funding for higher education research; and the creation of a broad range of educational initiatives, including passage of a 0.6 percent sales tax, the P - 20 Agenda for preschool through graduate school and workforce development programs, and support for the Governor’s State Policy Committee on the Workforce.

This relatively united effort on the part of regional business-civic organizations in the Greater Phoenix area is particularly important due to the relative lack of cooperation among the region's local governments. These governments are very competitive and have a high level of distrust.

The business community works very well with Governor Napolitano (a Democrat). The Governor has listened to the business leadership and worked closely with it to develop an agenda they can both support. The Business Coalition model has now been extended to other regions of the state.

The success of the Business Coalition is directly attributed to the leadership of Bill Post, who serves as the Chair of both GPL and the Coalition. It has been Post's vision and leadership that has inspired the Business Coalition's efforts to establish a common agenda and adhere to collaborative problem-solving. Post will be stepping down from the Chair of both organizations this year, while still retaining leadership positions on both Boards. New Chairs will be assumed by both GPL and the Business Coalition. The challenge will be to sustain the successes and influence the Coalition has been able to create and maintain under new leadership.

A significant aspect of the Phoenix model has been the coordination of issues among regional business-civic leadership organizations. As noted above, other regions have tended to merge such organizations when overlap on civic issues has occurred. In the Phoenix region, these organizations have decided to informally coordinate their approaches, focusing on a few united actions. While not all members of the Business Coalition fully support the priorities of other members, they have not worked against them. This has gone a long way to keeping the Coalition active, successful and influential.