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dedicated to furthering
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in Southern Arizona

A position paper on:

Urban Growth Plans and Boundaries

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Executive Summary

Highly dense development (as is contemplated in any Urban Growth Boundary) allegedly reduces congestion and pollution and is the trade off for slowing the conversion of the Sonoran Desert into urban uses. In fact, densifying the urban area will only protect a limited portion of the Sonoran desert, will accelerate the development of many choice properties and will ultimately increase congestion and pollution.

- **Choosing higher density v. peripheral growth has serious consequences.** Higher density areas breed related social responses including higher crime rates per capita, more property related crimes and a higher incidence of violent crime. Higher densities also limit choices in terms of lifestyle options related to housing stock and have dramatic impact on quality of life issues such as higher ambient noise levels, an increased heat island effect, higher non-native pollen levels, increased water run off/flooding problems during monsoons and a higher incidence of communicable disease transmission.

- **High density development increases congestion.** Packing more people into a fixed area may decrease the share of trips taken in cars; however, this is more than offset by the increased auto use from the larger number of people. Brooklyn, New York which is 10 times more dense than Portland, has half the auto driving per capita, but that still translates into five times as much auto driving per unit of land based on trip miles per capita.

- **High density development increases air pollution.** Pollution increases with congested driving conditions. High density development increases congestion thereby increasing ambient pollution levels.

- **High density development will not prevent urban sprawl.** Some people want to live in low-density areas. Deny them the right to do so in the urban area and they will simply move next door to the jurisdiction which will allow them to. If just 5 percent of the people who would build on quarter acre lots go outside the UGB and build on large, multi-acre parcels instead, then encroachment into the undeveloped desert will be accelerated, not slowed. The larger the minimum parcel size in the rural area is, the faster urban sprawl will occur.

- **Defending Suburbs.** The suburban growth pattern in Metro Tucson is the result of public demand for large, affordable homes built away from the older urban core. The buyers of homes dictate the success or failure of a subdivision of new homes and builders are merely providing the product that consumers are demanding. The detached single family home is the "American Dream."

- **Portland's solution is Tucson's economic ruin.** Arizona relies heavily on the assessed value of real estate for taxation to raise revenues both for state and local jurisdictional general fund income. Creating an artificial supply and demand equation through implementation of a UGB will dramatically increase property costs in the Metro Tucson area thereby driving up property taxes. People on fixed incomes (the poor and retired) will be affected adversely and in many cases will be forced to sell their asset simply to avoid losing it to the Assessor for back taxes. These displaced households will be shifted into rental properties which, generally, have low pride of ownership and have a negative impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood. There is a direct correlation between job growth and taxes. The higher the taxes, the lower the job growth. Arizona is already one of the most heavily taxed states in the country. A substantial rise in taxes to the business sector will have serious implications; not only to job growth, but business stability in general. It is not unrealistic to assume that the bankruptcy rate and the unemployment rate will rise in direct proportion to increases in real property taxes to be paid as a direct result of the implementation of a UGB.

- **If it can't be financed, built and sold it doesn't make any difference what you plan.** Planning in and of itself is a worthwhile and important exercise - a necessary tool to insure a logical and integrated pattern of growth; however, planning should not be unresponsive to the marketplace. Buyer's purchase the homes that meet their needs and which are affordable. If implementing a UGB interferes with the ability for the home buyer to acquire the home they want, then the market will ultimately reject the UGB.

Statewide Growth Control Measures

In 1978 the voters in Oregon approved a ballot measure which set in motion the first statewide growth control planning effort in the country. Various reasons have been stated as to why the voters approved such a measure, however, the most commonly acknowledged reason was a fundamental desire to protect family farms and untouched stands of forest land from being enveloped by the urbanization of Portland and surrounding smaller communities.

Urban growth boundaries (UGB's) are an interesting case. They are a hybrid of growth controls and growth management because they mandate a no growth area but are also (in principle) expandable. UGB's are meant to increase densities and can be thought to protect land at the fringe from development. The theory behind the UGB is that it provides a land mass that can be adequately supplied by urban services, and provides for densities that hypothetically make for "optimal" use of public resources. Portland is famous for its UGB, which was adopted in 1979 and currently consists of about 365 square miles and 24 cities. Portland plans to expand the UGB only "as necessary." The decision to expand the UGB lays with the Metro Council, an elected regional planning authority.

Central to the theme of the adopted growth control measures were control of transportation and related infrastructure development as well as creating a one home per 80 acre "family farm" rural zoning category which prohibited the construction of even one (1) residence unless the property owner could demonstrate a net income of at least \$80,000 per year from the farming activity. Additionally planning tools such as the "green overlay zone" (which denies the affected property owner(s) the right to build anything on their property thereby insuring "open space") are central to the effectiveness of the UGB.

The UGB is essentially a "line in the sand" whereby little or no-growth will be permitted outside the boundary. The "protection" of the lands outside the boundary comes inversely at the cost to the lands within the UGB (the "urban core"). Infrastructure extensions, permits and rezonings are almost exclusively limited to within the UGB.

The Oregon growth plan, started in 1978, has evolved dramatically. Today's plan (METRO 2040 Growth Plan) forces newcomers into "town centers" and other highly densified, mixed use areas. It requires that land inside the UGB be developed on relatively dense residential lots of just over 6,000 square feet (approximately 7 homes per acre for single family detached housing) and sets in motion a series of incentives to cause developers to "redevelop" close to 9,000 acres of existing neighborhoods to take advantage of even higher density zoning. Multifamily housing units (apartments, condominiums and town homes) have been increased, by Metro Council dictate, from 30% to 35% of the overall residential mix. One half of the state of Oregon's total population lives in the METRO UGB.

"The UGB works in Portland because we have some very pro-development things in there." The Portland Plan includes a '120 days to permit' rule, no moratoriums, fee reductions if the permitting process takes too long, the 'presumption of certainty' (Citizen input is limited only to the "planning" phase) and any citizen who creates project opposition thereby causing delays or expense to a developer has personal liability for their actions."¹

"Nobody in his right mind, however, would suggest that the UGB has put an end to sprawl in the Portland region. Between the city limits and the boundary line are a collection of roads, malls and low-density housing indistinguishable from those found in all metropolitan areas. As Portland Councilman Charlie Hales says, "A lot of trash around the edge of Portland is as trashy as the trash around any other city. It's God awful subdivisions right up to the line."²

"You can't just say where it (growth) can't go-you must indicate where it can go and make it easy to do the right thing."³

¹ John Chandler. Metro Portland Oregon Home builders Association. Urban Growth Boundaries: The Rest of The Story.

² May, 1997. Governing: The Great Wall of Portland

³ John Fregonese, Director -Growth Management Services. Portland. Urban Growth Boundaries: The Rest of The Story.

Urban Growth Boundary v. Sprawl: Is it better to grow up or out?

Like most cities in the country, growth in Metro Tucson has occurred in the form of suburban development. Historically, the Old Pueblo has grown by expanding on its periphery where utility extensions are easily accomplished. Suburban growth here has been market driven by providing a type of lifestyle that a broad segment of Americans strive for and, in fact, is one of the main reasons why Tucson is considered to have a good quality of life.

Yet, over the past few years, suburban growth in Metro Tucson has been stigmatized by the term "urban sprawl." In the words of Dr. Stephen Hayward at the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy:

"Sprawl has become the original sin of modern land use planning. It receives the blame for seemingly every bad aspect of contemporary urban life. It is said to be "leapfrog" in character. It is said to create long home to work commutes. It is, above all, irrational to the orderly mind of a planner. Even the very word "sprawl" has an offensive ring to it, ideal for the pejorative purpose for which it is used. Who can support something that sounds so ugly?"

The roots of the term "urban sprawl" come from the communities of the Midwestern and eastern portions of the country. The term is used to describe a form of development which involves low density, poorly planned and uncoordinated settlements beyond the edge or periphery of the urban area. Much of the displeasure with urban sprawl relates to the impact it has had on the older, more densely developed central cities. The flight to the suburbs in those Midwestern and eastern cities created numerous social and economic problems due to the loss of more affluent residents, the decline of downtown retailing, and deterioration of the tax base, just to name a few.

By contrast, the Metro Tucson area never developed a very dense residential or commercial core and, today, has one of the lowest ratios of persons per square mile of any major metropolitan area because of the lifestyle driven growth our community has experienced. This suburban growth pattern has, in the long term, not harmed downtown Tucson. In fact, suburban population growth has actually provided the population mass needed to help the more recent commercial revitalization of the downtown area, making it stronger now than it has been in decades. With the advent of a housing type, acceptable to our lifestyle, there could also be a commensurate revitalization of the residential component of our downtown area.

The Old Pueblo's suburbanization process has been anything but poorly planned and uncoordinated. In fact, all local jurisdictions have adopted comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances and capital improvement programs to plan and accommodate future growth. Studies conducted by the city of Scottsdale and more recently by Pima County have conclusively shown that suburban growth pays for itself. "Infrastructure becomes a revenue generator for the County."⁴

Both the City of Tucson and Pima County generate significant revenue from new development that is used to support services for existing residents and developed portions of their respective jurisdictions. While rapid growth has caused difficulties for some school districts, those problems are the result of the State's school financing laws, not municipal planning activities. In fact, both County and municipal planning are essentially divorced from any school district nexus as is intended by current state law.

"....the detached single family home is still the lifestyle choice here. Our urban boundary keeps expanding to accommodate the large numbers who want that lifestyle. The expansion may be contentious because many people who move to the edge want to stay there,but the growth is not disorderly, unplanned, unpredictable or contrary to historical patterns."⁵

While suburban growth has been criticized by many interests, it is actually the result of a conscious effort by most Americans to improve their quality of life. As stated by J. Thomas Black of the Urban Land Institute:

⁴ Maeveen Behan, Special Assistant to the Pima County Administrator

⁵ February, 1998: Arizona Planning Association Newsletter. Thoughts on Urban Growth Boundaries.

"The problem ... is that there are no organized defenders of sprawl to challenge the organized coalition of interests coming from the environmental, historic preservation, and city interest groups who have tended to view sprawl as harmful to their causes. As a result, the opponents of sprawl tend to ignore the fact that sprawl is not an objective that anyone seeks but is instead the cumulative and combined result of the pursuit of other important objectives such as better housing values, less congestion, safety, good schools, cheaper modern industrial and commercial space, lower taxes, and lower labor costs."

Suburbanization is the result of market forces at work. It is one of the reasons Tucson is one of the most desirable places in the country to live. Home owners overwhelmingly prefer detached homes in low density neighborhoods. A 1989 Gallup Poll shows that Americans by a four-to-one margin prefer to live in non-urban areas versus urban areas. The National Home Buyers Preference Survey indicates a strong preference for large lots, quiet neighborhoods, cul-de-sacs and communities designed to conveniently accommodate automobiles. A recent survey by the Federal National Mortgage Association found that Americans are willing to make great personal and financial sacrifices to own a home. Eighty-one percent of the respondents were willing to commute a long distance to own a home.

Other studies undertaken by the Urban Land Institute reveal that suburban residents are concerned about crime, the quality of inner city schools, and the blight that erodes housing values. Life in the suburbs does not necessarily mean long commutes to the workplace. Over the last 25 years, job growth has followed housing to the suburbs. During that time, more than 80% of all new jobs created in the country were located in the suburbs and, consequently, over 80% of all new office, industrial, and retail construction occurred there as well. Other than the government sector, Tucson does not have a high concentration of jobs in one area.

Metropolitan Tucson will continue to grow in the future because of its low density suburban environment. While infill and intensification of land uses has its place in the urban environment, the impact of these concepts will not be felt for some time into the future because of the large size of the Metro area. As long as the American dream continues to be single family home ownership, Tucson's urban form is not going to change radically. The real question is: how can well planned growth occur without the "costs" associated with it being borne by existing residents?

Neuss (1992) looks at California's growth control experiences on a broader scale and points to serious housing shortages, skyrocketing new home prices and land costs, and an attendant housing affordability crisis in the San Diego area. Neuss links the housing crisis in San Diego County (and California in general) to job loss and an exodus of major employers and key industries. Neuss also argues that anti-sprawl policies in California have actually encouraged sprawl, as households located farther from urban areas in search of more affordable housing. He concludes with a set of suggestions for reversing the problems brought about by anti-growth movements, most notably deregulation of housing supplies.

"So what does cause urban sprawl? Certainly, zoning regulations in the suburban fringe welcome - or even require - sprawl development. But Columbia University urban historian Kenneth Jackson and other researchers have shown that zoning is only one of a maze of federal, state, and local policies that encourage suburban sprawl. These policies send a powerful message to people deciding where to invest in a home or a business: your investment will do better in the suburbs."⁶

The current model in vogue for controlling sprawl is the Urban Growth Boundary ("UGB"). Establishing such a planning tool in the Old Pueblo will dramatically alter the rules, investment backed expectations and real estate market in general. More importantly, the recipients of the highly focused impacts of growth within the UGB will see their neighborhoods dramatically change in a relatively short period of time.

Establishing a UGB creates winners and losers. You could be either. Those outside the boundary are frozen in time in terms of their current land use. Investment backed expectation is removed and is fundamentally transferred to the lands within the UGB. The marketplace will shift it's values overnight.

⁶ Spring, 1997: Land and People. New Hope for Ending Urban Sprawl.

Those neighborhoods within the UGB will have a disproportionate (when compared to today's marketplace) amount of speculative activity, price increases and density increases which are the natural extension of the creation of any non-market based, "artificial," boundary. The quality of life of the residents within these areas will suffer dramatic changes to their lifestyles as a result. "I'm not at all sure it makes sense for the Phoenix area," zoning lawyer Grady Gammage said. He warned that it could undermine one of the Valley's great strengths: affordable homes. ⁷

Density increases will translate into much smaller residential lot sizes, a much higher market share allocated to apartments, condominiums and town homes and will inevitably create the scenario where Tucson will move into higher and higher storied buildings. The days of the typical one story building will be a thing of the past.

"We have a severe housing problem. Our land prices have gone through the roof," said Don Morrisette, a Portland developer. "Whenever a piece of land comes up, there's 14 people trying to buy it. And that will keep happening until we go bust." ⁸

Creating a UGB has many side effects, not the least of which is that the constrained marketplace translates into ever spiraling increases in the costs of residential housing. A report by the National Association of Home Builders shows Portland, where home prices have approximately doubled since 1990, second only to San Francisco in the unaffordability of its housing, in terms of local income. ⁹

When asked to qualify the Portland real estate market, a local real estate broker said that there was "nothing nice over 2,000 square feet of interior on a 7,000 square foot lot available for less than \$300,000." ¹⁰

The Sierra Club's Urban Growth Boundary Initiative

The Citizens' Growth Management Initiative ("CGMI"), has been sponsored by the Sierra Club and is being coordinated by the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest. Assuming the general election vote is successful, all Arizona counties, cities, and towns of more than 2,500 residents would be required to create Urban Growth Plans and Urban Growth Boundaries.

The Act essentially creates a zoning and subdivision moratorium for at least a three year period of time (11/00 - 1/03) because it requires a 4/5 vote of the governing body for approval of any subdivision plat or rezoning and encourages citizen law suits with provisions for repayment of attorneys fees and damage awards. "As a result of the Initiative's expanded right of suite, which allows any person to sue communities about most any aspect of their growth decisions, all growth management plans and the future of all our communities will ultimately be decided in the courts." ¹¹ During the moratorium a citizens committee will develop an "Urban Growth Plan" which has a series of required topics for inclusion such as air, water and environmental quality as well as "full cost recovery" impact fees. The mandatory provisions of the Initiative are equally applicable in scope, intensity and depth to communities such as Vail, Catalina, Green Valley as well as Tucson or Phoenix. Each community is treated identically with no provision for local flexibility or regional context.

In November of 2003 the committee drafted Urban Growth Plan and UGB will be submitted to each jurisdiction's voters for yet another approval process. Assuming that the electorate approves the plan it will be valid for 10 years at which time the process will be repeated in 10 year increments. No rezonings are permitted outside of the UGB unless the project is less than 20 acres in size and is accompanied by a 4/5ths majority vote on the part of the elected body. After 1/1/2003, no city, county, or utility may extend water, sewer or other infrastructure outside of the UGB. If you have land which is not served by utilities at that time it will remain fallow and may remain so perpetually.

⁷ 12/3/97. Arizona Republic: Growth limits sought for state

⁸ May, 1997. Governing: The Great Wall of Portland

⁹ May, 1997. Forbes. Down with the burbs! Back to the City!

¹⁰ May, 1997. Forbes. Down with the burbs! Back to the City!

¹¹ Perspective. Arizona Journal of Real Estate and Business. August, 2000

Upon adoption, the Plan can be modified by initiative and citizens can bring third party legal actions against the governing body in the event they feel the plan/UGB are not being properly implemented. This process essentially "freezes" in place the existing zoning as well as controls the extension of infrastructure outside the UGB. Only properties enjoying existing vested rights are permitted to be built out. Vested rights are limited to those properties which have a building permit in hand and which the property owner has expensed considerable time, effort and funds in developing the property to its intended use. The vested rights provision applies to the single lot owner in the same manner as the huge corporate subdivider.

Developers are to pay the "full cost" of additional "public facility" needs for all commercial, industrial and residential projects. Whether "full cost" is inclusive of capital costs, operating costs or both is unclear.

Urban Growth boundaries may only be large enough to provide for population growth based on a ten (10) year projection. Any amendments or exceptions to the plan for parcels over 20 acres will be referred to the voters for approval.

Growth Alternatives to the Sierra Club's Initiative

It is important to understand the effects of growth policies and the differences between controlling growth and merely managing it. The key difference between growth controls and growth management policies is simple: growth controls are meant to slow or stop the rate of growth of an urban area by choking off key growth catalysts. For example, a typical growth control policy is to restrict the number of building permits issued. Another growth control device is to mandate lot sizes for new homes, usually larger than the average in the area where growth is deemed undesirable. Because they are designed to stop growth, controls are often quite arbitrary.

In contrast, growth management refers to policies that are meant to accommodate growth while minimizing its perceived negative effects. Growth management techniques can include comprehensive impact fees, incentives to car pool, high occupancy vehicle lanes on key roadways, and zoning agreements that provide incentives for developers to create manageable, livable spaces. Each of these policies have been successfully implemented across the United States. Growth management policies are particularly well-suited to a free-market treatment of growth issues because developers, home buyers, builders, and employers would face market driven, as opposed to artificially induced, prices when deciding where to live, develop, or locate.

"To simply be against growth means nothing. We must learn to distinguish between healthy growth and that which signifies disease: there is no other choice..human settlements either grow or die, and any hope to the contrary is an illusion that diminishes our resolve."¹²

Governor Hull's "Growing Smarter" legislation and "Growing Smarter Plus" Initiative: Over the course of the last three years Governor Hull and the Legislature have passed several key pieces of legislation (the last of which was in February of 2000) and have referred two Initiatives to the ballot. The first Initiative was passed by the electorate in 1998 and the second will be on the ballot on November 7, 2000.

Initially, the Governor convened a series of meetings including interested citizens, key environmental organizations and community business leaders. Out of these meetings came a consensus package of legislative themes which were promoted as the "Growing Smarter Initiative." This preliminary package included strengthened urban planning through jurisdictional conformity of Comprehensive Planing and eliminated referendums from conforming rezonings. It also included mandatory growth and transportation corridor planning, environmental impact analysis, open space planning as well as state trust land planning. Additionally, a 2/3's affirmative vote must be obtained before a "major amendment" to a Comprehensive Plan is permitted. A 10 year life span on a Comprehensive Plan was mandated and the appropriate legislative body is required to either readopt the same Comprehensive Plan or formulate a new one every ten years.

¹² Designing the Future. Vernon Swaback, 1997

An aggressive, proactive, program for the acquisition and preservation of open space is also provided for; including programs such as open space acquisition, matching state funding (short and long term), state trust land open space dedications and development rights acquisitions through the Arizona Preserve Initiative, government land exchanges and a \$220,000,000 million dollar land acquisition fund was established to identify and protect appropriate land, on a state wide basis.

The Growing Smarter Initiative also included the creation of an 11 member study commission who would report back to the Governor and the Legislature with other specific items or issues which should be included. The study committee was be charged with reviewing whether or not the state land department should have a broader mandate (including the issue of state land exchange authority), regional planning, growth planning/funding and the reform of local planning statutes.

In September of 1999 the Commission submitted it's report to the Governor, who in turn drafted a new round of "Growing Smarter" legislation which ultimately became law in the Spring of this year. Considerable effort on the part of the Governor and the Legislature went into this landmark piece of legislation which expanded on the effort made previously. Key provisions which were passed into law were substantial reform of the subdivision statutes dealing with illegal wildcat subdivisions, permissive law granting cities the authority to create Infrastructure Service Area Boundaries (ISAB) which curtail the extension of publicly financed infrastructure beyond a given area and referred to the Ballot what has become known as "Growing Smarter Plus."

This Fall, the electorate will have the option of approving Growing Smarter Plus which expands the mandate of the State Land Department, further reforms local planning statutes, permits land to be given (free of charge) for public school sites and mandates regional planning between political jurisdictions. The centerpiece of the Initiative is the preservation of the "Crown Jewels" of Arizona. Ostensibly, the choicest parcels of State of Arizona Trust Lands would be permanently set aside in a "Preservation Trust" to assure that no development would ever occur there. Over Two Hundred and Seventy Five Thousand (275,000) acres of pristine land all across our State have been designated for this designation. The "Growing Smarter Plus" Initiative was placed on the ballot as an alternative to the Sierra Clubs' "Citizens Growth Management Act."

What will happen if the Sierra Club's Initiative passes?

Because of the draconian manner in which the Initiative is structured it is estimated that up to 200,000 jobs would be lost, statewide, within the first year of passage. The real estate market would be forced to adjust to what is tantamount to a complete revision to the very fabric of the marketplace. "Essentially, the deck would be 'reshuffled' mid game. Every property owner in the state will be forced to reevaluate their investment. For most, the impacts will be devastating."¹³

Those vacant land owners who are lucky enough to find themselves owning property within what would ultimately be a UGB would reap a windfall. Those homeowners who are unlucky enough to find themselves living within what would ultimately be a UGB would find that their quality of life had been traded "for the greater good" of the community at large. The area within the UGB will see density increases of as much as 7 times what Tucson currently identifies as "high density." Traffic will grind to a halt, air and noise pollution will increase in direct proportion. Taxes will increase as property values skyrocket; those on a fixed income will be forced to move out. Without commensurate support of a growing job base and increasing the average wages in our community there will be a day where most Tucsonans are frozen out of the market; their American Dream having been stolen from them as a result of the Initiatives effects.

Vacant land owners who are unlucky enough to find themselves owning property outside of the UGB would find themselves owning worthless investments overnight. No building permits (residential, commercial or industrial) will be issued on any such property. As such, the property owner is then in the position of owning "open space." There is one slight caveat to this highly punitive provision in that if you have a "vested right" (e.g., building permit in hand and you've expensed considerable sums of money to "perfect" your use under the zoning) the Initiate "allows" for you to continue to completion. "Everyone else is left holding the bag, regardless if they are a retired couple

¹³ July, 2000. Guess Who's Moving in? The impacts of the Sierra Club Initiative. Speech to REALTORS®: Bill Arnold

getting ready to build their dream home on an inner city lot or if they are a huge corporate home builder waiting to build a golf course and 1000 homes. No discrimination here, everyone is treated equally in these regards."¹⁴

What happens if you live outside the UGB and your house burns down? Assuming that you want a new home, the answer is clear; You'll be moving into the high density UGB with all of its commensurate traffic, air and noise pollution. What was your home will now be relegated to the "open space" category.

How will we know where the UGB is going to be? Until the growth plan and UGB mandated by the Initiative are approved by subsequent election (no later than 1/1/03) everyone in Tucson will have a 1 in 10 chance of being the recipient of the UGB and all of the negative effects that will come with it. The fact of the matter is that no existing neighborhood will want to be encumbered with the reduced quality of life that will come as a result. "The Sierra Club Initiative is intended to shift most new development from its normal location on the edges back into already urbanized areas."¹⁵

Metro Pima Alliance

Growth management v. Growth control: Could (or should) a UGB work in the Tucson area? The UGB would be approximately 8 miles in size [4% of the area of Tucson] and would receive all of the new permit activity, including residential, industrial and commercial, that would otherwise be "spread" throughout our community. Creating a UGB would do little, except to dramatically increase the population density, exacerbate the problem of road and freeway congestion and substantially increase prices for both new and used homes in the Old Pueblo. Indeed, Portland's home prices are among the highest in the West and least affordable on a National basis. Another factor weighing against any sort of growth boundary in the Metro Tucson area is that the land ownership, vested rights and dedicated uses surrounding the Tucson area are quite diverse. A growth boundary would almost certainly be susceptible to political infighting as different cities face different preferences and incentives for growth.

"A Nation in love with truck-size utility vehicles is unlikely to embrace the housing equivalent of an Escort."¹⁶

Anti-sprawl advocacy in the Tucson area usually contains emotional references to the desert's scenic beauty and ecology being tainted by oceans of tile roofs and scores of new residents. The free market is alleged not to work where environmental protection is concerned. Is it not possible to preserve our desert environment (including our open spaces) while allowing wealth-creating development of new living, shopping, and work spaces?

The answer is a qualified "yes." So-called "green zoning" is an idea which provides for preservation of open spaces (or ranch, riparian, or other sensitive areas) while allowing for the same amount of development which would occur under conventional zoning. The idea is to cluster development in a portion of a given parcel of land and leave the rest undeveloped as open or agricultural space. The open space could be protected under a conservation easement co-signed by a local land trust.

There are many benefits from open space zoning. It can be easy to administer, and it does not penalize landowners at the fringe. Open space zoning can also be effective in permanently protecting substantial portions of land. Cost savings are also possible because cluster development reduces the amount of infrastructure necessary to service the tract and substantially reduces the need for public open space acquisition.

In the Metro Tucson area, open-space development can preserve sensitive areas while offering significant amenities to new home owners. A potential drawback to this type of zoning, however, is that it may not significantly depoliticize development and it invites argument over which open spaces should be protected. Nevertheless, if protection of land and open space is an important goal, open space zoning is an idea that has worked in other areas.

¹⁴ July, 2000. Guess Who's Moving in? The impacts of the Sierra Club Initiative. Speech to REALTORS®: Bill Arnold

¹⁵ Perspective. Arizona Journal of Real Estate and Business. August, 2000

¹⁶ May, 1997 Forbes Magazine: Down with the burbs! Back to the city!

As early as the 1960's Webber anticipated the rapid growth of the Sunbelt: "Spatial dispersion seems to be a built-in feature of the future-the complement of the increasing diversity that is coming to mark the processes of the nation's economy, its politics and its social life" (1963, 23). Webber viewed sprawl as a positive feature that fostered interdependence by spreading "urbanity" and created prospects for "a maze of subcultures within an amazingly diverse society organized upon a broadly shared cultural base" (1963, 29). Sprawl does not destroy urbanity and diversity, he argued, it fosters and nurtures them."¹⁷

Conclusions

"A recent *Denver Post* series looked longingly at Portland, but was candid about what it found people thinking: The paper's own metastasizing metropolis, it said, "can be attributed to the popularity of the single family home with a yard."¹⁸

The debate over urban sprawl and quality of life issues in the metropolitan Tucson area has become one of the most heated and divisive topics in recent memory. It has pitted home owners against developers, environmentalists against business interests, and current residents against newcomers in a battle that won't be "won" by any side. Throughout the debate, there have been misunderstandings about the way Metro Tucson has grown and why it is such a desirable place to live.

We should not forget the fact that the real responsibility for our current urban form lies with our County Board of Supervisors and the political process which is inherent in a Democracy. A Democracy, by its very nature, is dynamic and fluid; subject to the pressures of current public demand versus the swing of public opinion over time. The Comprehensive Plan says 6 units to the acre, the developer wants 8 units to the acre and the neighborhood wants 1 unit to the acre. The typical conclusion to these difficult situations is a Board of Supervisors decision which abrogates the Comprehensive Plan designation by reducing the density something akin to "splitting the difference" all while creating urban sprawl because the land that should support 6 units is approved for 4. In the meantime the Board has angered everyone in the process and destroyed the intent and goal of the planning effort we already have. Why should anyone assume that this process will be any different under the guise of a UGB?

For decades, the Tucson metropolitan area has been one of the most rapidly growing areas in the country. A combination of a reasonable cost of living, good quality of life, availability of resources and generally positive government attitude have made the Tucson area an attractive place to live. Given these dynamics, the Metro area will continue to grow in the future. Of primary importance in accommodating this growth is the quality of our built environment. Our future lifestyles will be determined in large part by where residential development occurs, how it is integrated into the natural landscape, how different land uses relate to each other, and the effect of new development on transportation and other services. All this must be accomplished while offering a broad choice of housing types for all income levels.

While much of this commentary has been supportive of suburban development in Metro Tucson, this is not meant to suggest that all is perfect in paradise. Primary complaints about the suburbs are the monotony of red tile roofs, the "sameness" of house color and design, lack of open space, facades largely comprised of garage doors and other similar concerns. Given the reality that growth will continue in Tucson, there are ways to improve our urban form. Metro Pima Alliance supports the following design concepts:

1. The basic unit of planning should be the neighborhood. Residents of Metro Tucson often refer to their neighborhoods as their place of residence rather than their municipality (i.e., Ventana Canyon, El Encanto, El Rio etc.). The neighborhood should have well defined edges and a focused center. Its size may be as small as a five minute walking distance from the edge to the center or as large as a master planned community. Its focus may be a retail center, neighborhood school, open space or a combination of these (or similar) commonly needed uses. Neighborhoods should also have an identity. Landscaping concepts, entry features and similar design elements can create this identity.

¹⁷ Summer, 1993 APA JOURNAL: A Sunbelt Urban Design Manifesto. Mark Fink, Pima County Planner.

¹⁸ May, 1997 Forbes Magazine: Down with the burbs! Back to the city!

2. City and County development standards need to be modified to better adapt our subdivisions to the desert environment. While vehicular transportation will continue to be an important element, its impact can be reduced by minimizing street widths and promoting other forms of nontraditional transportation. Wide streets increase heat gain and promote excessive travel speeds not appropriate in residential areas. Street widths should be based on usage and street layouts based on a concept of limiting through-traffic. Pedestrian and bicycle paths should be incorporated into the design to allow connection to important activity centers such as shopping, schools and parks.

3. Open space and desert preservation can be compatible with suburban development. We need to do a better job of open space planning, much like what is happening in projects like the "Rocking K Ranch" master planned community and the integrated lifestyle planning that has gone into "Coyote Creek." Integrating desert, natural open space and other recreation areas within planned developments ensures longer term value and adds to an enhanced quality of life.

Housing can be clustered to preserve the desert in its natural condition. Large lot zoning, with no clustering or preservation of common open space, should be discouraged as a poor substitute for integrated neighborhood planning. In addition to the ensuing habitat and vegetative impacts, large lot zoning is extremely inefficient both in terms of initial capital costs for excessive infrastructure extensions as well as the ongoing operation and maintenance of same.

4. Government entities, wherever possible, should continue to acquire open space for future generations. Tucson Mountain Park, the Saguaro National Monument expansion and Cienega Creek Preserve are excellent examples.

5. The edges of a development should be a key feature of its design. Appropriate land use transitions need to be provided between new development and nearby existing residential areas. The visual impact of the subdivision along major streets should also be an important consideration. Adequate landscaping and setbacks can help minimize the visual impact of new development.

6. From both the regulatory and engineering perspective, building codes and zoning ordinances should result in the "sameness" of an end product. CC&R's and municipal design review guidelines should be written to allow for flexibility and variety in design rather than "sameness." Home builders would then be encouraged to improve their housing standards and designs to avoid monotony thereby creating variations in color, materials, building setbacks, and other elements.

7. New development should include all of the related capital costs associated with it. From streets to schools and parks to police; the ambient costs related to each new development should be included in the costs of each new home, apartment and shopping center and passed on to the subsequent home buyer, tenant and commercial property owner.

8. All jurisdictions within eastern Pima County under the aegis of the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) should commit themselves to mandatory regional planning cooperation.

"Jacobs and Appleyard recognized that not all people will agree with their vision of the ideal place. So it is in the Sunbelt and so we return to the beginning. The Sunbelt embodies intrinsic values that must be recognized and incorporated into any new vision of the region. As Lawrence Speck says, we need to "sort out...the cogent patterns of our culture and to provide an enlightened interpretation of them."¹⁹

Metro Tucson will continue to be one of the country's fastest growing areas which will continue to manifest itself in a low density suburban form. Our challenge is to ensure that suburban growth is well planned so as to maintain and improve our quality of life in the Arizona desert.

¹⁹ Summer, 1993 APA JOURNAL: A Sunbelt Urban Design Manifesto. Mark Fink, Pima County Planner.