

Help us do some 'Placemaking' in Tempe

The desire for lively, shared public places has shaped human settlements since the first cities were built. Look to the Native American riverfront villages, such as the one at Hayden Butte, as an early example.

Satisfying that desire for a vibrant community is what's driving the city of Tempe's placemaking project, an effort to find ways to improve the Mill Avenue District, Tempe Town Lake and Papago Park areas for an even better, integrated community experience.

Tempe is experiencing an unprecedented growth cycle, with more than 45 major projects and \$2 billion in new development underway. This will define the city's physical form and opportunities for recreational and social interaction for generations to come. It is imperative that decisions be made now to create common spaces, to encourage the commingling of people and to make the most of the public spaces that already exist.

The Project for Public Spaces' Placemaking process was selected by Tempe as a democratic way to build a common vision and find partners to implement results. The program is based on a common sense understanding that comes directly from people's concerns about their lives.

Included in the Placemaking efforts so far have been community members from throughout Tempe and the greater metropolitan area, the Downtown Tempe Community, Tempe Chamber of Commerce, Tempe Convention and Visitors Bureau, Arizona State University

EAST VALLEY VOICE



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COMMENTARY

students and administrators and the Papago Salado Association. The hope is that Tempe will invigorate its already strong community energy, something the city is known for throughout the country. By empowering people to define and improve their neighborhoods place by place, we can enliven streets, parks and other public spaces that are the building blocks of a thriving city.

Tempe faces key issues to continue to foster its attitude of creative, innovative, fun energy. Some considerations for the future include:

- Creating a vision to preserve Tempe's authenticity while appealing to a diverse population representative of an evolving downtown.

- Leveraging the incoming buildings to foster a great ground floor experience with active and inviting sidewalks throughout the Mill Avenue District, Tempe Town Lake and Papago Park areas.

- Maximizing new waterfront projects, such as the Arts Park and Town Lake Welcome Center and Boathouse to create destinations with broad appeal and many uses.

- Creating new destinations

around Tempe Town Lake to appeal to all Tempe residents and make the most of this rare opportunity.

- Expanding Mill Avenue's experience to become an entire district connecting to neighborhoods, Town Lake, ASU campus, light rail transit station areas and sports venues.

- Expanding the Mill Avenue experience from weekends to all days.

- Connecting Tempe's destinations through better streets, signage and wayfinding devices to make them feel comfortable and accessible for people on foot, bicycles and connecting to light rail.

Hundreds of people from around the community have given their time and energy to discuss what is great about Tempe and what needs improvement. From several meetings and public workshops, scores of good ideas emerged for establishing a network of connected community places and for how to invigorate them as active destinations. On Feb. 26, the public will have another chance to participate — both to hear some preliminary ideas born out of the process so far and to do additional brainstorming to bring those ideas further along.

Work on the Urban Space Development Plan will continue through spring 2007. Information on the plan, process and public input can be accessed at www.tempe.gov/com-dev/urbanopenspace.htm.

Phil Myrick is a vice president for Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org), a non-profit organization that for more than 30 years has worked with cities around the world to create and sustain public spaces that build communities.