

The attitude has changed

by Tim Kanavel, Director, Pinal County Economic Development

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In many localities economic development is considered a blood sport. Cities facing off with cities all fighting to get a company looking to relocate.

Time and time again, this turns out to be a failed strategy with no one winning.

Pinal County has taken a new approach to compete on a local, state and national scale.

"It makes little if no sense for us to fight against Casa Grande, Maricopa and Apache Junction for businesses," said District 3 Supervisor Steve Miller.

He pointed to several areas on a Pinal County map, showing areas that are ripe for commercial development.

"We have our challenges, that's for sure," Miller continued. "We are currently dealing with State Land to try and make the Union Pacific Classification Yard a reality. But when you look at other areas across the county, they have their challenges too. It makes for a better economic development package to join forces with other chambers of commerce. They have their strengths,

we have ours. Together we make a formidable team to a company wanting to come here."

Miller specifically pointed to the recent announcement that Tractor Supply Company will be developing a major warehouse and factory next to the WalMart Distribution Center on Thornton Road (groundbreaking was to occur on Monday, November 17).

"That's was a coup for not only Casa Grande, but for the entire county," Miller stated. "The end result is jobs, good paying jobs for our residents. When you combine that with the upcoming Phoenix Mart, this is not just good news for the county, it's great news for the county."

Pinal County as a whole offers a lot to a company looking to start up, expand or relocate. Open space to build is readily available. There is a vast transportation network that includes easy access to Interstates 10 and 8. And now – a more business friendly climate adopted by county leadership.

"Job creation is our primary focus,"



PINAL COUNTY

Wide open opportunity

Miller said. "When you want jobs to come here, you have to know what companies want."

Pinal County Economic Development Director Tim Kanavel said that to get the attention of employers, the county had to have an attitude change.

"We could be settle for service oriented jobs and small tourism," Kanavel said. "But in the end, those jobs tend to not pay all that well. So it came down to working with this current group of supervisors to develop a game plan. Basically 'what kind of jobs do we really want here?'"

Kanavel said the county is focusing on five targeted employment centers. Aerospace/Defense, Manufacturing, Health Services, Natural/Renewable Resources along with Transportation and Logistics.

"It came down to how could the county create a business friendly environment," Miller said. "We started looking at the permitting process. I have heard from people who wanted to start a business that our processes actually slowed down their progress and they became discouraged. Right away we had to make some reasonable concessions, but make sure the Countywide Comprehensive plan stayed intact."

The supervisors focused on removing or mitigating roadblocks that prevented an 'ease of commerce' otherwise known as unnecessary time constraints on permitting, creating compatible zoning along with fair and even enforcement of regulations.

Our new catchword around the county is "we want your business," Miller stated.

Pinal County At A Glance:

- The county encompasses 5,374 square miles, larger than the State of Connecticut
- I-10, I-8 and Union Pacific Railroad all provide transportation through Pinal County
- Home to almost 400,000 residents
- Has 12 incorporated and several unincorporated communities within its borders
- Pinal County has 3 Native American communities:
 - Ak-Chin Indian Community
 - Gila River Indian Community
 - Tohono O'odham Indian Community
- Pinal County has two distinct regions. The eastern portion is characterized by mountains with elevations to 6,000 feet and copper mining. The western area is primarily low desert valleys and irrigated agriculture.