

Mary Kortsen

Question 1: The purpose of market branding is to effectively attract investment in our community by job-creating businesses; to produce and recruit talented workers; and to get the word out that we are a great community to live, work and visit. I agree that marketing Casa Grande is crucial to keep our city moving forward. The idea of establishing a "Destination Marketing Organization" dedicated to these efforts is very wise. It is also crucial to be sure that there is the right mix of backgrounds sitting at the table.

I am always cautious about increasing taxes, even one that is very focused. However, I could support such a tax only if there is a good organizational plan first and we have the buy-in of the community. All monies collected for this purpose would be used solely for marketing activities. The management of such a group should be within the group with oversight by the City to ensure tax dollars are being used appropriately.

Question 2: In order to have a robust employment base we must have the ability to get our workers to and from work. That may sound simplistic but it is a daily challenge for many of our workers to get to work, and on time, due to unreliable transportation. I firmly believe that this has to be recognized and solved. I am not a proponent of public transit just for the sake of public transit. In these times there are other solutions that include private business and the large employers affected by this problem. The technology is there. The City can be the catalyst to bring all of the players together and create extraordinary and innovative solutions.

Question 3: Quality of life includes a community that feels safe. Thus, public safety is crucial. We spend over 50% of our budget for public safety. If I were faced with an inability to provide good police and fire protection, community projects would have to take a back seat. Would I raise taxes? I would have to say that I would have to be provided with a concrete analysis that would support such action. Over 53% of our annual budget goes to public safety, it would be an extraordinary circumstance that would warrant an increase in taxes.

Question 4: Attracting and keeping talented workers is a huge challenge. The establishment of a Destination Marketing Organization is an important step. But, we also have to provide those quality of life components. Today's talented and educated workforce put quality of life as important as salary. The City can help by identifying those quality of life projects that provide for our community now and in the future. We can also be the catalyst to assist our local businesses to develop in such a way that they, too, can attract new business.

Another important issue that is not often spoken of is our inner city traffic. We have developed streets and roads much as cities have done since the 50's. There has not been much innovation in design and planning. I believe that there are several innovative solutions to avoid the gridlock experienced by our metropolitan neighbors to the north. I believe that the solutions do not mean just adding more lanes and more lights. While we have the options, we should be creating expressways and other alternatives.

Question 5: I believe that the City has been very successful in stimulating economic development. However, we must continue on this path without negatively impacting our residents. Impact fees have been significantly cut over the past few years. Much is due to the fact that too many cities used these fees for expenditures that had nothing to do with the impact the project had on the community.

I am of the belief that the City needs to do a better job in working with our local business people and developers. When a local businessman gives up on a project due to his frustration with our planning department and fees structure, we do a huge disservice to our community. These are folks who have lived in our community for a very long time, raised their families here and invested in our community. I realize we have to exert caution not to get into legal hot water for giving a better break to our local business people. But, let us take a serious look at what we can do.