

WICKENBURG

Town Hall 2017

Summary and Consensus Statements



Town of Wickenburg
Economic Development
Advisory Commission

Executive Summary

The Town of Wickenburg Economic Development Advisory Commission, with support from the Wickenburg Town Council and sponsors, hosted the Wickenburg Town Hall event on January 27 and 28, 2017 in downtown Wickenburg.

Anyone in the community could sign up to attend, and nearly 70 people did, engaging in a facilitated, solutions-oriented conversation regarding the following topics: 1) downtown, 2) economic sustainability, 3) human capital, and 4) team roping. Each conversation had a scribe serving to take notes.

In the following pages, consensus statements are found for each question discussed. Each consensus statement represents the scribes' effort to identify underlying points across all the facilitated conversations.

The following themes represent key points emerging across the Town Hall sessions. They are consistent with past Town Halls, similar community forums and other public input. Leadership from across the community will be needed to fully develop these ideas and turn them into action in the coming years.

Build Relationships

1. Foster regular communication between the Town and the business community, non-profit organizations, and residents.
2. Develop relationships with ropers and roping producers to better integrate this vital economic engine with the rest of the community.



Grow & Enhance Labor Force

1. Collaborate with educational partners to provide industry demanded career training in Wickenburg.
2. Create a clearinghouse to match potential volunteers with organizations needing volunteers.



Develop Business

1. Provide opportunities for successful retirees to mentor local students and entrepreneurs to help grow and retain local business.
2. Market Wickenburg more effectively for business investment, particularly targeting businesses related to entertainment, resorts, dude ranches, light industry, arts and culture, retail and outdoor activities.



One Downtown, One Message

1. The Town and key stakeholders should serve as a convener of downtown merchants and other stakeholders to spur increased events, activity, marketing and investment downtown.
2. Create a downtown plan that promotes infill, redevelopment and western-themed design standards.
3. Turn downtown into a year-round destination by providing shade structures, enhancing and increasing pedestrian areas, hosting regular arts and cultural events and boosting the overall number of events downtown.



Encourage Workforce Housing

1. Perform a housing needs and demand analysis to identify housing demand and to quantify what the local market can support.
2. Create a website for available residential rental units.



Town Hall Consensus Statements

Each consensus statement represents the feedback from the Town Hall participants at the Town Hall event. The Town is often called out as the responsible party for a variety of initiatives. However, it is readily recognized that for long term success, partnerships with participants, stakeholders, and the community at large will be required.

Roping

Question: What kind of benefits does our community want from the roping community?

Wickenburg continues to grow as not only a seasonal team roping mecca, but a destination for all types of equestrian activities, including trail riding.

To maximize the value of the equestrian sector for Wickenburg's economy, we first need to open lines of communication, build relationships, and better understand the needs of event producers, ropers, and other stakeholders.

We should recognize the timeliness of this conversation, as we could lose this industry to other communities that are also competing for those dollars.

Keeping and growing the equestrian sector in Wickenburg will require several types of investments from both the private and public sectors, including ease of mobility for ropers and their families, parking for large vehicles, diversity of housing types, practice arenas, and restaurants and services catering to participants' needs.

If we are successful in building a community where equestrian enthusiasts want to be, whether seasonally or year-round, we can expect to see their increased involvement in the community, word-of-mouth marketing around the country, and additional revenues for businesses and municipal services.

We can also expect further benefits from non-roper visitors by creating venues for viewing this authentic Western event.

Downtown

Question 1: What do we want downtown to look like in 20 years?

In twenty years, historic downtown Wickenburg will be known as “Old Town” Wickenburg that has maintained and enhanced its western charm and architecture that makes it an exciting destination apart from all other communities across Arizona. The downtown area will be known as a vibrant artistic and cultural destination.

Pedestrian friendly streets and public plazas will host numerous annual and other activities and events for people of all ages. Historic façades will provide a strong sense of place for visitors as they stroll the streets, where signage easily directs pedestrians and vehicles alike to area destinations. The downtown will be lively with a mix of stores and restaurants that operate with uniform hours and the entire district will be marketed as a single destination.

The natural and enhanced beauty of the Hassayampa River and pedestrian areas, with additional trees and shade structure, will provide enhanced character and recreational opportunities downtown. The downtown area will extend beyond what we commonly know it as today to include parts of West Wickenburg Way past Frontier Street and the area around Sols Wash.

Question 2: What steps can be taken to help downtown become Arizona’s premier, year-round destination for all ages?

More effective promotion and marketing for the area will be key to attracting new investment, businesses and visitors to the area. More regular events should attract families and visitors of all ages and walks of life to downtown. Shade is absolutely vital to creating a desirable, year-round place for visitors and businesses.

Question 3: What immediate and mid-range investments and policies are needed to realize this vision and goal?

The Town should partner with businesses and other stakeholders to utilize existing studies, and through new studies formulate innovative ideas, to create a plan to enhance and improve the downtown area as an attractive place to retain and attract new business.

Some investments include building connections between different parts of downtown, marketing the area as an investment and tourist destination, and implementing regulations that require buildings to have standard architecture that further enhance the downtown Western theme. Existing store front façades should be improved and enhanced to further foster the desired Western theme. The Town should continue to invest in improved signage that enhances the theme while retaining an aesthetically pleasing look.

Question 4: What role should Town government plan in aggressively pursuing this vision?

The Town has an important role to play in pursuing a long term vision for economic activity and prosperity in the downtown area. Foremost, the Town should work as a convener to bring the right groups together to realize the vision. Patience will be required as this is a long term investment to enact the proper tools and find the adequate funds to realize the different goals.

The Town should carefully consider enacting, or possibly eliminating, certain regulations in order to attract and encourage business activity downtown and provide for proper code enforcement. Furthermore, the Town should continually refer to its General Plan and amend it as necessary. Efforts should continue to fill empty store fronts, spur new investment, and encourage ways to eliminate blight.

Economic Sustainability

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Question 1: What are the key challenges impeding economic growth in our area?

Economic growth challenges include a long-standing need for workforce level housing, a general lack of labor in the market, both in skills and volume of available workforce, entertainment options, higher education, career readiness training and quality jobs, particularly for second wage earners. Other impediments include, to a lesser degree, the availability of daily conveniences and entertainment offerings.

The phrase was coined, “We just want to buy socks!” Possible threats but also opportunities include I-11 and the downtown bypass, as well as a lack of marketing investment opportunities in the community.

Question 2: What immediate and mid-range investments and programs are needed to overcome the impediments to Wickenburg’s economic growth?

Steps can be taken now and in the future to help overcome the challenges to economic growth. Among them include a renewed investment in career training for youth and adults, focusing on programs available through the Wickenburg Unified School District, West-MEC, and internships.

A concerted marketing campaign to attract new business to the area could help spur new investment. Local businesses need increased access to capital. Efforts should be made to increase entertainment and cultural offerings, like the bowling alley, an improved airport, and workforce level housing.

Question 3: What programs and tools will help local entrepreneurs be more successful?

A business survey should first inquire what type of training small businesses need. An entrepreneurial mentoring program could match new entrepreneurs with successful retirees to help ensure long term business sustainability and local, organic economic growth.

A business incubator, like those found in other Phoenix area communities, may help provide a center for entrepreneurs to access technology, mentoring, training, networking, and capital. Furthermore, small business start-up guides and tools, coupled with a town one-stop shop will provide further tools for easy business start-up. Grants and other creative funding sources should be identified to create these tools and programs.

Question 4: What industries with family-sustaining wages can be realistically grown or recruited, what do they need that is not available, and how do we supply it?

Wickenburg needs to retain and grow its existing businesses that pay family-sustaining wages, including the healthcare and manufacturing sectors. However, other types of industries can be marketed and recruited to the area, including entertainment venues, a resort, more dude ranches, small business technology and light industry.

Other entrepreneurial opportunities include a brew pub and similar small, local retail shops, businesses that capitalize on Wickenburg’s ample trail system and other outdoor offerings. Other opportunities include building on our strong art and culture scene.

Human Capital

Question 1: What gaps exist between local residents' skill sets and employer demands, and what funding, actions and organizations are needed to address the gaps?

We need to establish a forum for businesses to identify what their needs are. To fulfil those needs we need ways for residents to obtain various certifications and training to qualify for those jobs. This can be accomplished by things such as bringing a Community College closer to the area, setting up a satellite college location, and by providing funding to schools to offer things such as additional West-MEC training.

We also need to promote the Arizona@Work service at the library and encourage the high school to teach an emphasis on work ethics. Additionally we need to find ways to offer affordable housing to retain employees.

Question 2: What initiatives can be taken to recruit and/or retain full-time residency of in-commuters and other workforce aged individuals and families?

While many expressed concerns that Wickenburg not lose its charm and appeal and therefore become more of a Surprise like city, others felt there were several things we could do to recruit and retain workers. There is a need for more shopping, evening dining options, parks and recreational activities, and evening opportunities other than bars.

We need more affordable housing options such as more residential rentals, condos and apartments. We should create a forum to bring people here and find out why they do not move here. Furthermore, we should create awareness of virtual offices and the opportunity to telecommute. Finally, we should encourage employers to offer incentives so workers will want to work here.

Question 3: What steps can be taken to provide workforce level housing in Wickenburg?

The Town needs to review its zoning to allow for areas for tiny homes, family friendly mobile home parks like the 55+ neighborhoods we currently have, and modular homes. The Town should conduct housing needs and demand analysis and encourage redevelopment in older neighborhoods.

This can be accomplished through partnerships with HUD, CDAC, Habitat for Humanity and others to provide housing assistance. Finally, a website of available rentals should be made available.

Question 4: How can volunteers be mobilized and utilized to their maximum potential?

We need a central location to match volunteers with organizations needing volunteers that can be advertised through the Town's website, social media, welcome packet, and the newspaper.

We also need a mentoring program, possibly through the school, requiring volunteer hours for high school graduation, possibly utilizing retirees as mentors. This program will need to provide transportation for the students.

Furthermore, we need Hispanic teachers and night classes to teach those that speak little or no English and vice versa. A rewards program to encourage and keep volunteers should be created.

Thank You Town Hall 2017 Sponsors:

Town of Wickenburg

Economic Development Advisory Commission

Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce

Wickenburg Community Hospital

Wickenburg Ranch Golf & Social Club

Arizona Public Service (APS)

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