



Paper: Tucson Citizen (AZ)

Title: Can Town Hall succeed where others failed? -

It is encouraging that former UA President Peter Likins has agreed to head the Tucson Regional Town Hall.

Date: March 9, 2007

Anyone who has lived in Tucson for more than a short time has heard it all many, many times before.

Gather a group of people - including, of course, the usual suspects: elected officials, bureaucrats, businessmen and women, developers, a car dealer or two. To make it look good, invite some "ordinary people."

Then spend hours - possibly even days - to chew over The Big Issues: What do we want Tucson to be? What do we have to do to get there? How do we get everyone motivated and on the same page?

At the end of the exercise, a report is issued. It is read and praised, then put on the shelf.

And that's the end of it. Nothing happens. People feel better for taking part in the exercise, but a week later and a year later, things remain unchanged.

It would be tempting to pigeonhole the upcoming Tucson **Regional Town Hall** as the latest such exercise. But we hope that is not the case. And there are encouraging signs that organizers are taking steps to make a more productive outcome more likely.

Foremost among those steps is the selection of Peter Likins to head the May 6-9 effort. The president emeritus of the University of Arizona is sincerely interested in having a broad and representative spectrum of the community take part in the **Town Hall**.

That is key to making it successful. If the sessions are dominated by those who are always pushing the same ideas, we'll end up where we are now.

Organizers of the **Town Hall** know there is skepticism. Asked where such an undertaking has been successful, they point to Envision Utah, a program aimed at providing strategic quality growth for the Greater Wasatch Area, centered on Salt Lake City.

But the comparison ends practically where it begins, because the Greater Wasatch Area takes in 100 miles in either direction and a population of 2 million. The population's demographics are much different than in the Tucson metropolitan area.

Nonetheless, Likins is enthusiastic and confident of success. "Communities grow up, too, not just people," he said. "And maybe we've reached the point."

We hope he's right.

Tucson needs a comprehensive vision - something that will be widely embraced and seized upon by elected and community leaders. We hope that happens through the Tucson **Regional Town Hall**.

It will happen if more than those usual suspects step up to be among the 150 participants. **Town Hall** organizers are inviting 75 business, civic, political and governmental leaders. The other 75 will be selected from among anyone who chooses to apply.

Success will be defined by those who come to the table and put together an agreed-upon vision.

› To apply for the Tucson **Regional Town Hall**, see this article at www.tucsoncitizen.com.

Fighting metal theft

Good for the state House, which has taken strong action to crack down on scrap metal thieves who are plaguing the state.

The House this week passed and sent to the state Senate a bill that would restrict on-the-spot payments to people selling a large amount of scrap metal.

In addition, sellers would have to provide photo ID. And payments of more than \$300 would have to be sent by mail using a check or money order.

Theft of metal from construction sites and completed projects has become a growing problem that has cost builders a substantial amount of money. The bill would help police track down thieves.

This is a needed addition to state law. We hope the Senate passes it and sends it along to the governor for her signature.

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Page: 8A

Dateline: Tucson

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